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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PRAYER

By
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TO

THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER

1859–1919

A MAN OF PRAYER

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THERE are three outstanding facts which, taken together, make the following study of *The Psychology of Prayer* a distinct contribution to the literature on this subject. One is psychological; one, philosophical; and one, pedagogical.

As a psychologist, Professor Stolz has seen the far-reaching, practical implications of suggestion and of the more recent developments in the fields of psychoanalysis and psychosynthesis. He is intelligently familiar with the dynamic theory of psychology. Approaching the problem of prayer from this general point of view, he has been able to throw new light upon its essential nature and function. After reading this book many persons will use prayer intelligently and reverently as a distinct method of mental and moral control. Prayer cannot be understood in its essential nature by one who makes the states of consciousness coextensive with the horizon of psychological inquiry. Prayer is an expression of the entire psychic nature of man, and as such puts at the disposal of the individual the most dynamic forces of his personality.

As a philosopher, the author holds a theory of reality and of ultimate values which is entirely compatible with an active, personal faith in God as revealed and interpreted in the Christian religion. This study, though not concerned primarily with philosophy, has its setting in a theology which

closely resembles that of Borden Parker Bowne. The one who believes in prayer and its almost limitless possibilities will find his faith strengthened, as well as his insight into the technique of prayer clarified, as he catches glimpses of Professor Stolz's philosophical position.

Finally, this book has been written by a skilled teacher. The splendid organization of the material will be a welcomed relief from the disorder found in so many texts on the psychology of religion. "How does prayer differ from suggestion?" "Is prayer efficacious outside the range of personal and social influence?" "Can unanswered petitions be described as failures of suggestion?" "Can the response to petitional prayer be described in terms of subconscious reaction?" It is when face to face with such significant questions as these or with an unusually happy illustration that the reader will appreciate the teaching ability of Professor Stolz. Though dealing with materials which the ordinary layman looks upon as subtle and illusive, the author has been highly successful in presenting his argument in simple, clear terms.

Students of psychology, particularly of the psychology of religion, will recognize the value of this study primarily because of its scientific nature. The rightful limitations of the field and the method of science are clearly distinguished. But within this scope the study is rich in discovery and in practical suggestions. It is a substantial illustration of the spiritually constructive, the faith-creating work that can be done by one who is both scientific and devout.

NORMAN E. RICHARDSON.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In writing this book the author has had in mind the religious interests and needs of intelligent people of to-day. The stress and strain of our modern life rather than the circumstances of former times have largely determined the selection of the material herein presented and its treatment. Every oncoming generation must find itself religiously in a perpetually shifting social order. It has been the purpose of the writer to assist in the discovery of those prayer values which will further adjustment to the expanding universe of to-day.

Prayer is religion alive; hence the salient phases of religion are considered in a study of prayer. He who understands the principles of the one has a lively appreciation of the facts of the other. This book may serve as an introduction to a psychological study of religion.

The Christian religion and prayer experience have been given the preference and preeminence throughout this study. Only incidental and illustrative references have been made to the prayer habits and beliefs of other types of religion. Speculation about the religious life of primitive and extinct peoples has been almost entirely avoided. Within the range of Christian doctrine and practice extreme varieties, with but few exceptions, have been excluded from consideration. The normal life of prayer has been regarded as most profitable for study and emulation.

Petitional prayer has been given a comparatively

large amount of space for two reasons. In the first place, according to the statistics compiled by students of the psychology of religion, of the several forms of prayer, the petitional is still the one most frequently made. It has a practical value which we do well to conserve. In the second place, the religious strains and tensions created by modern science are particularly severe and critical in the field of petitional prayer. A special effort has been made in this book to confirm or reestablish confidence in this form of prayer.

Prayer has been approached herein from the angle of the doctrine of the immanence of God. The author's contention is that God is not an impersonal force like the ether, if there be such; or the personification and deification of the complex of social values which are the resultant of race experience; but, rather, the personal spirit, uncreated and eternal, from which the world of man and nature is derived, the self-conscious and self-governing ultimate court of appeal. It is not easy for a mind untrained in scientific method or unfamiliar with the fundamentals of a theistic philosophy to correlate and assimilate the results of a psychological study of religion; hence the findings of the present investigation have been constantly related to a spiritual conception of the universe.

The difficulties which have been encountered in the study of prayer have been both numerous and serious. The prayer relation is rich and varied in its structure and effects. Its psychological elements are subtle and elusive. Furthermore, it is hard to treat dispassionately and impartially such a personal and central experience.

In order to make this contribution accessible to laymen as well as to professional readers, the material has been cast into the thought-forms of the modern man of intelligence. In many instances the use of technical terms has been avoided, and those employed have been expounded by definition, illustration, and context. In order to simplify the thinking of the student, to supply supporting evidence, and to assist the memory, concrete cases have been cited in quite liberal quantity and variety.

The writer's appreciation of and indebtedness to the work of other students of religion have been indicated in the many references scattered throughout this book, and in the appended selected bibliography. It is hoped that the numerous direct and indirect quotations from the writings of others will induce the student to read the wider literature produced by the science of the psychology of religion.

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CHAPTER I

THE POINT OF VIEW

Prayer is a source of inspiration in the lives of many whose character and intelligence compel respect. It occupies a unique place in man's quest for the higher values. In the midst of the various interests which men cultivate, such as art and science and politics and industry and trade, religion, the heart of which is prayer, is still fundamental and dominant. Many devout people temporarily withdraw from the presence of their fellow men, fall upon their knees, fold the hands, close the eyes, bow the head, pour forth their deepest yearnings and hopes, and arise clothed with peace and power.

It is not strange that many protest against a critical examination of prayer. They instinctively shrink from submitting this sacred and intimate experience to a rigorous analysis, lest unholy hands commit a sacrilege and religion itself be discredited. The fear that an investigator is an iconoclast has not always been groundless. An unsympathetic or irreverent approach to prayer results in negative findings, and even destructive activity. Since it is the nature of religion to disclose and conserve the eternal verities which formal logic cannot demonstrate and which the laboratory of the scientist cannot reveal and test, it is only normal that religion be on the defensive when threatened by a cold and irreverent intellectualism.

Many are content with their practical experience and feel no need of a critical examination, but there are others who have a sincere desire to understand the nature and place of prayer. Inquiring minds that demand a reasonable basis for the prayer life have rights that others should respect. They assume that no fact is too personal or holy to be tested to the utmost. They consider the scientific method a means to a higher end, a crucible in which the dross is separated from the gold. They hold that a psychological study of prayer should be more than a formal exercise or the gratification of mere curiosity; they insist that analysis and description should disclose the merits of prayer and lead to a better control of its principles. This attitude is manifestly constructive and positive. All investigations of the prayer relation should be attempted in this spirit.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

What is the purpose of the study of the psychology of prayer? Where can enough material be found to make the study scientific and reliable? Are all prayers of the same general nature, or are there various types? What are the various types of prayer? What are the general psychological characteristics of each of the several varieties of prayer? A comprehensive answer to these preliminary questions will indicate the lines which the psychological study of prayer follows.

The task.—Although the facts of prayer may be approached from various angles, the present task is to ascertain how and to what extent they may be expressed in terms of psychology. The task is

to disengage what for the sake of convenience may be called the human elements from the total prayer experience, to describe them, and to compare them with like known mental factors. We shall constantly be mindful that the psychological phases analyzed out do not constitute the whole prayer experience. The botanist knows that when he has dissected a rose he no longer has a rose, for a rose is an organism, a union of parts sustained by plant vitality. Prayer, likewise, is more than the constituent elements to which it may be reduced; it is a unified process prompted and supported by the religious nature of man. It is well to keep this fact before us as we proceed with the discovery and discussion of the psychological traits of prayer.

Sources of prayer material.—A prerequisite of this undertaking is an abundance of prayer data. Fortunately, it is not hard to collect a wealth of material. The stores of religious biography and devotional treatises are available. Psychological expositions of religion and particularly of prayer contain many serviceable references. About two hundred autobiographical confessions of the prayer life, received in response to four questionnaires, contribute to this study.[1] The majority of the respondents are members of such leading Protestant denominations as the Methodist, the Baptist, the Presbyterian, and the Congregational. Both male and female, the laity as well as the clergy, are represented.

The faults of the questionnaire method of gathering data are well known and need not now be re-

[1] Three questionnaires were circulated by students of Professor J. B. Pratt, who generously placed the responses at the service of the present writer. The questionnaire sent out by the author appears in the Appendix.

hearsed. Nevertheless, its severest critics have not suggested a more excellent way of collecting material of a personal and intimate nature. The psychology of religion must take such facts into consideration. Religion is a personal as well as a social experience and the individual himself has a right to testify to what he feels and knows and does. The intelligent use of the questionnaire takes it for granted that the oral or written testimony may be confirmed or modified or discredited by further personal interview or correspondence. The historian, for example, who relies upon ancient relics and documents for information does not possess this advantage. His method has all of the defects without the redeeming features of the questionnaire. To be sure, a conscientious effort must be made to discriminate between trustworthy and unreliable answers to the list of questions. To reject all personal confessions of religious experience because many of them are inaccurate is, as the Germans say, to pour out the child with the bath-water. The accounts from which deductions have been made in this study have been selected from the responses of those in whom there is reason to repose confidence. No far-reaching conclusion based upon this material has been accepted and urged unless convincingly supported by broader factors. Many accounts serve to illumine and confirm inferences drawn from wider considerations.

The essence of prayer.—Prayer may be simply and comprehensively defined as man's intercourse with God. All true prayer, spoken or unexpressed, is included in such a general description, and at the same time all meaningless and merely formal

participation in exercises and rituals, incorrectly termed prayer, is excluded. That which does not function religiously is not prayer. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is."[2] Though they be accompanied by all the outward forms of prayer, words without faith are dead. Though they be devoid of the external accompaniments usually associated with prayer, thoughts and feelings directed to God as the One unto whom all flesh comes are prayer. Kneeling, bowing, closing the eyes, folding the hands, formulating sentences do not constitute the heart of prayer, significant as they are. To these must be added the inner attitude of humility and expectancy, the movement of the soul toward its God.

Petitional and devotional prayers.—An examination of a mass of representative prayers reveals two large classes—the petitional and the devotional. The basis of the classification is the psychological structure as well as the purpose or function of the prayers. The difference in mental traits between the two classes will be discussed later. Petitional prayer is primarily an entreaty, a request, a solicitation addressed to God for definite favors, rights, or concessions. It is a means to an end. It is instrumental. It is an appeal to God for such values as regeneration, moral cleansing, divine guidance, restoration of health. The devotional prayers, as a whole, move within the sphere of appreciation. There is a tendency to engage in religious devotion for its own sake. Most of the devotional attitudes culminate in themselves. They are motivated not so much by a desire to use God as by a disposition

[2] Hebrews 11. 6.

to be used by God. Adoration, worship, thanksgiving, confession, consecration, communion, and aspiration are specific forms of this common type of prayer.

The petitional prayer reaches out after something special, the function of the devotional is more indefinite and general. Of course such a classification is not absolute; there is overlapping; the line of demarkation between the two classes wavers here and there. Furthermore, one should bear in mind that the religious interest usually combines and fuses the petitional and devotional elements in a single prayer.

Psychological phases.—It is evident that prayer as a human process involves mental elements. Without such psychological traits as thought and feeling, memory and imagination, will and habit, the life of prayer would be impossible. The mind expresses itself in these and other ways in the prayer relation as in other human experiences. For instance, according to what has been attained in prayer in the past, memory stimulates or represses the prayer impulse. Again, one cannot pray for what one cannot imagine. In imagination there is pictured to oneself that which is desired as a possession or as an experience. The scope of prayer is limited only by the creative imagination. Even God is mentally pictured. Although we realize that God is a spirit and that it is impossible for us to conceive of a purely spiritual being, we form a mental image of him when we pray to him. Since prayer exhibits known mental principles, a psychological study of it is possible.

Bringing the wider facts and more comprehensive

principles of psychology to bear upon an abundance of typical prayer material, we discover, in petitional prayers, the presence and influence of a psychological complexity called "suggestion." From the standpoint of structure, devotional prayers may be subdivided into two groups. The chief psychological characteristic of one group seems to be a release, an escape or eradication of certain disturbing mental states. A process known as psychoanalysis will throw grateful light upon this form of devotion. The other group is marked by the assimilation of a situation or an idea which reorganizes the personality. The essential feature is the adoption of a new center of insight and power. The mental aspects of this group may be described in terms of synthetic activity.

The following chapters develop this outline of the psychological phases of prayer.

THE THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION

To those who are unfamiliar with the limited field of psychology, a statement of the psychological facts of religious experience may prove to be disquieting. After having made a rigorous and honest analysis and comparison of all psychological aspects of prayer, a perplexed religious mind may raise such momentous and pressing questions as the following: Is the universe mechanical? Is there an element of free will in the psychological processes? Should not the prayer life be abandoned? What is the nature and character of the God consistent with such findings? Is there not some way of proving his objective reality?

These are questions which psychology as such

does not and cannot answer. They fall within the sphere of theology and philosophy. The psychology of religion has nothing to do with such problems as the moral responsibility of man and the transcendent existence and attributes of God. But in order to forestall any possible misunderstanding and confusion it is advisable to set forth in a few words the theological and philosophical position adopted and maintained in these pages.

Explanation and description.—At the outset it should be stated that much confusion is avoided when the *description* of a mental aspect is clearly distinguished from the final *explanation* of it. The mere description of any event is by no means identical with its explanation. The former is only a portrayal and delineation of a manifestation of something which is more basal. Explanation is concerned with the nature and constitution of that which cannot be reduced to a more elemental value. It involves ultimate considerations. Description is confined to the forms and processes in which the irreducible reality expresses and expands itself. Science describes the outward manifestation of that which theology and philosophy attempt to explain. Science as such does not occupy itself with the origin, destiny, and final value of the world. The last word belongs to faith, not to science. Science is limited in its scope, faith penetrates to the heart of the world of nature and man.

Men may agree in their description of a thing, but differ radically in their explanation of it. A number of geologists may agree in their portrayal of the earth, but diverge widely in their conception of its origin and purpose. The geologist with an

agnostic view of the world will deny the possibility of knowing anything about the origin and meaning of the earth. The atheistic scientist will flatly reject God as the explanation of the existence of material things. The scientist who holds a theistic point of view will reduce the earth to a dynamic principle, to a supreme creative Mind, to God. On the other hand, they may be in agreement as to their explanation of the globe, but disagree as to its structure and history.

In like manner the mere description of religious processes leaves the explanation untouched: the tracing of the psychological elements of prayer is one thing, the final estimation of prayer quite another. This distinction will prove to be pertinent and serviceable.

The immanence of God.—The scientific discussion of prayer in no way militates against the doctrine of an intelligent and benevolent God, a vein of self-direction in man which makes him morally accountable, and the superlative value of the religious impulse. Without hesitation or reservation the writer accepts the conception of God as Father with all which that symbol implies of self-consciousness, creativeness, and love.

Nor is such ground sinking sand. While it is true that psychology cannot by searching find out God, while the affirmation of the existence of the God of Christianity is not a scientific finding but the outcome of religious faith, an unbiased study of the facts of prayer moves in the direction of a God who unfolds and realizes his purposes in the response of humanity to his promptings. The reduction of certain prayer processes to discover-

able psychological principles, far from rendering the existence of God unnecessary and therefore highly improbable, lays bare his accustomed modes of self-activity which we call laws. It is superficial to exclude the reality of God from all consideration when once his method of self-fulfillment or of self-expression has been described.

The idea that God lives apart from the world of man and nature, self-contained and self-sufficient, the only proof of whose existence and potency is an interference with the ongoings of the natural order, is both unchristian and untenable. The doctrine of the immanence of God, according to which God is the animating and controlling Spirit of the world, the Sustainer as well as the Creator of all things, is the more logical conclusion from science and the positive teachings of Jesus. A free Spirit, a personality, God is immanent in the universe, nowhere absent and never disconnected from its life. Not that he is limited by the natural world. Like the spirit of man directing and even transcending the human body, God makes the world which he creates and inhabits the servant of his will.

Subjecting the mental traits of prayer to a deeper penetration, we hold that the uniform processes we call psychological laws and principles are the habitual manifestations of the creative energy of God. Natural law is not independent and self-existing; it is not in itself an entity. The world is not governed by law, but by God through law. The self-activity of God is not irregular and confused but uniform and orderly. Prayer is not only in a universe of law but also of it. To assign prayer

a well-merited place in God's reign of law is to rescue it from the chaotic and capricious, from the weird and bizarre, from portents and prodigies, from the magical and superstitious.

This idea of God removes the artificial barrier which has been erected between the sacred and the so-called secular. The arbitrary classification of all things under these two heads has been most unfortunate and productive of much mischief. When life is divided into secular and sacred compartments a tendency arises to reject the sacred and to regard all as secular. God's creation cannot be partly sacred and partly secular. We must hold fast the principle that one and the same God operates through the law of gravitation and the answer to prayer. When once the significance of the immanence of God is grasped in its various bearings and relations everything that ministers to the needs of man and makes for moral and religious progress is sacred.

Not that there may not be various degrees of the immanence of God. There is a higher form of the immanence of God in the animate than in the inanimate world; in man, than in animals. A tree is higher in the scale of the divine immanence than a rock, a sheep than a tree, and a man is worth more than a sheep. *God doubtless comes to unique self-expansion in the prayer that springs from the depths of the religious soul and reflects his will and purpose.* God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever in his benevolent intention, but his possibilities, opportunities, and resources are multiplied when man yields to the inner and divine promptings. When men hunger and thirst after righteous-

ness the way is prepared for the expression of God's moral attributes in human conduct. In a vital sense we not only live and move and have our being in him, but he, in turn, would live and move and have his being in us.

Christian psychology.—There is a discernible movement among some students of pronounced Christian convictions, to disengage the psychological interpretations of religion from atheistic attitudes or vague and impersonal notions of God. To such attempts the term "Christian psychology" is frequently applied. Such a movement is unfortunate and unnecessary. Psychology as the observation and comparison of evidences and expressions of the mind is wholly independent of any religious outlook. The principles of psychology are, or should be, the same for all. For analogous reasons one would hesitate to formulate a Christian botany. Religious affiliations condition the ultimate interpretation of mental states, but they should not affect the study of human nature as such.

Nevertheless, the point of the scholars who desire to relate and combine sound psychology with wholesome religious belief should not be flouted. The tendency in certain quarters to reduce religious experience to nothing more than human behavior, or mechanical processes, or sociological activities, or a contentless abstraction, or an impersonal force, should be strenuously opposed. Those who would base the mental sequences of the Christian life upon the nature and work of God as revealed in the teaching and person of Jesus are quite within their rights. They are justified in interpreting the type of life motivated and

directed by the enthusiasms of Jesus as something more personal and enduring than a by-product of the nervous system, self-operating natural laws, or a passionless energy. So long as the series of psychological phases is correctly described and properly related to the larger system of law of which it is a part, it is neither scientific dogmatism nor religious bigotry to explain Christian experience in terms of moral responsibility and an immanent God.

CHAPTER II

SUGGESTION

Since the element of suggestion in petitional prayer is to receive special attention, it is obvious that a detailed study of it is indispensable. A clear understanding of the structure and function of suggestion in general makes possible a worthwhile study of the mental traits of petitional prayer.

THE ESSENTIALS OF SUGGESTION

A suggestion may be defined as a mental pressure which tends to express itself without conscious effort or control. The essentials of suggestion are: (1) the introduction of an idea into the mind, (2) faith in the realization of the idea, (3) the automatic realization of the idea, (4) relaxation. No suggestion can be effective if any one of these factors is wanting. Each makes its contribution to the process as a whole, but is at the same time so intimately related to the others that it is impossible to determine where the activity of the one ends and that of the others begins. The unity of this process should be borne in mind during the following brief description of its salient aspects.[1]

[1] The following definitions are more or less serviceable:

"I have myself defined suggestion as 'from the side of consciousness . . . the tendency of a sensory or an ideal state to be followed by a motor state.' "—Baldwin, J. M.: *Mental Development in the Child and the Race*, p. 105. The Macmillan Company.

"A suggestion is, we might say at first, an idea which has a power in our mind to suppress the opposite idea."—Münsterberg, Hugo: *Psychotherapy*, p. 86. Moffat, Yard & Co.

"By suggestion is meant the intrusion into the mind of an idea; met with more

Holding the suggested idea in mental focus.—The lodging of an idea in the mind is the basal factor in suggestion. This process may be described in terms of attention; the idea to be realized is a mental impression; it is forced upon the mind. When an idea is held in mental focus critical and opposing tendencies are withdrawn. When reason and judgment are held in abeyance the idea glides into the mind without encountering the resistance which a more critical state offers. The emotional and nervously unstable persons are highly suggestible; that is, their mental constitution is favorable to suggestion.

Of all persons little children are the most suggestible. They lack control over their mental impressions, they have no fund of established ideas to serve as a basis for distinguishing fact from fancy. Their critical powers are dormant. Hence suggestions remain uncontradicted and tend to realize themselves subconsciously. A small boy was one day commanded to perform an odious task. It occurred to him that if he were ill he would be excused, and at once the wish was entertained that he might plead some form of ailment, say a pain in one of the limbs. The wish was the father of the sensation, for almost at once a dull pain was experienced in the calf of the leg. It was duly reported, and he was excused.

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or less opposition by the person; accepted uncritically at last; and realized unreflectively, almost automatically."—Sidis, Boris: *The Psychology of Suggestion*, p. 15. D. Appleton & Company.

"Suggestion is only another name for the power of ideas, *so far as they prove efficacious over belief and conduct.*"—James, William: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 112. Longmans, Green & Co.

"Suggestion is a process of communication resulting in the acceptance with conviction of the communicated proposition in the absence of logically adequate grounds for its acceptance."—McDougall, W.: *Social Psychology*, p. 97. John W. Luce & Co.

An elocutionist was reading poems of child life at the request of her niece, a child three years old. In the course of the impromptu entertainment the reader ran her fingers through the locks of the eager little listener, repeating at the same time these words, "The wood-ticks are crawling through your hair." So effective was this unintentional suggestion that the child at once insisted that wood-ticks were in her hair, and so realistic was her sensation that only after her scalp had been thoroughly washed did she regain her composure.

Such examples taken from childhood show us what occurs in adult life in a modified form. The efficacy of a suggestion, then, depends, in the first place, upon the impression made upon the mind. The idea must be planted in the mental soil before it can grow and bear its fruit. Self-control, self-analysis, reason, and judgment tend to combat the suggested idea; uncritical attitudes, emotion, imagination, and a restriction of the field of consciousness increase the state of suggestibility. The degree of opposition met by a suggested idea is in inverse proportion to the suggestibility of the mind for that suggestion.

Faith included in suggestion.—Suggestion is more than attention, it embraces a faith state. Belief that the idea held in mind is about to express itself or has already been realized is absolutely essential to the success of suggestion. At first the suggested idea may meet with more or less opposition, but eventually it must be uncritically accepted by the person. The degree of faith exercised is in direct proportion to the state of suggestibility, for not all suggestions are equally powerful or arresting. Like

a check presented for payment, the idea must be indorsed before it can be "cashed." In the case of suggestion, however, the indorsee and the cashier are one and the same personality.

The fact that suggestion transcends mere attention may become more obvious when we examine a concrete case. A small boy, four years old, came running home crying. In response to the questions of his father he explained that some apples he had eaten were pronounced poisonous by his playmates. His confidence in the integrity of his playmates resulted in the excruciating pain generally associated with the eating of tainted food. Assured by his father that he had been misled and that the fruit was edible, the youthful sufferer soon rid himself of the pain. To have made mere poisoning the material of attention would have occasioned no physical distress, but the belief that he was actually poisoned induced the reaction. Attention as such is merely selective, faith is the personal acceptance of an idea as activity. The mental prominence of an idea does not of itself constitute a suggestion, but only when the person is inclined to act upon it or to be influenced by it does the mental impression tend to express itself. The idea of heat becomes a suggestion only when a sense of rising temperature is induced.

Faith may be regarded as an inverted memory image. It is a much warmer state of mind than an imaginary picture. While memory is conscious knowledge of the past, faith is a firm assurance that a future event is as certain to occur as if it had already happened. It is more than simple apprehension; it transcends the feeling of mere

reality. It attaches to its object a sense of security and confirmation. While knowledge and emotion are not foreign to faith, its unmistakable criterion is preparedness to act. Faith without works is dead. Action is its very essence.

We have faith in that which, for us, is uncontradicted. Doubtless the small child is credulous, believing everything and proceeding upon the untested assumption that whatever is presented to him is the truth. He has no suspicions because he lacks experience and the power of reasoning. As the mind develops and a fund of experience accumulates, the demand for proof and confirmation becomes increasingly insistent. Faith tends to become rationalized. It is a belief of mind as well as a trust of the heart. When credulity is shocked by contradictions, the range of ideas in which one can believe is restricted.

We are likely to have the greatest faith in the idea which spontaneously holds the attention. One is easily swayed by ideas which are related to one's bodily appetites, the emotions and passions, or which promise gratifying and immediate results. Ideas concerned with far-off considerations and postponed emergencies are relatively cold. In the face of the overwhelming surge of instincts and emotions, a distinct effort must be put forth by the average man to hold before the mind the more rational and moral ideas. It requires effort to make such ideas controlling factors in conduct.

The part which faith plays in suggestion is paramount. It expresses itself in an expenditure of energy. Its function is to initiate a subconscious process and to give it point and direction. It is a

strained expectancy which increases the circulation of the blood, the outlay of nervous force, and which centers nutrition for the expression of the suggested idea. In its initial stages faith is self-assertion, activity of the will, a striving toward the expression of the suggested idea. Its stimulative feature will be still more clearly brought out when the subconscious element in suggestion is treated.

The subconscious mind reacts to faith as such. The outcome of a suggestion is not determined by the nature of the object of faith but by organic activities aroused by expectations. It is significant that mind cures are placed to the credit of divers agencies. It has been abundantly demonstrated that the idea of health tends to realize itself regardless of whether the patient relies upon the efficacy of a sacred relic, a bread-pill, or a magnetic healer. The reliance upon a motley variety of remedial agencies coupled with the added fact that all are effectual in the healing of the same kind of diseases, makes it necessary to draw the conclusion that it is faith as such, and not necessarily the powers invoked, which cures. The expectation of the reaction is of primary importance, the character of the reputed means is irrelevant.

The self-realization of the suggested idea.—The third essential of suggestion is the self-expression of the idea through the automatic processes of the personality. Once securely lodged in the mind and accepted, an idea by virtue of the constitution of man tends to fulfill itself. Any idea held in mind tends to express itself. "In short, mental and motor automatism constitute the prominent

elements of suggestion."[2] The procedure is largely subconscious.

The range of our mental life is far more extensive than the activities of which we are pointedly aware; growths and connections within the personal life, of which we have no momentary clear consciousness, are all the while occurring. A subconscious process is any form of mental action which is influential but not clearly recognized and identified by the self. Only the ripples of the great stream of life come within the sphere of consciousness. Most of life is submerged beneath the level of awareness. It is the function of the waking consciousness to cope with novel situations. If problems are solved often enough, awareness refers the task to the automatic apparatus. Observe the conscious effort expended by a child when he learns to button his shoes, and the ease and lack of attention with which an adult performs the same operation! Through repetition and practice that which is at first consciously undertaken tends to become automatic, subconscious.

The mental pathology of daily life affords many striking examples of subconscious activity. On close inspection, such seeming aberrations as lapse of memory, slips of the tongue and pen, misspelled words and oversights suggest the presence of this underlying stratum of mind. Some time ago the writer was requested to inquire about the health of the wife of a friend with whom he was then conversing by telephone, but hung up the receiver without complying. The failure seemed as inexcusable as unaccountable, but later, while reading,

[2] Sidis, Boris: *The Psychology of Suggestion*, p. 10. D. Appleton & Co.

it flashed across his mind that that very afternoon he had met the woman upon the street and had most solicitously inquired about her health. Again, when building a fire he passed by a newspaper within easy reach and hunted elsewhere for combustible material. Later it occurred to him that the paper contained an editorial which he had resolved to read at his earliest convenience. Recently he has discovered a pronounced tendency to strike lightly the wrong key when using the typewriter. Grotesque mistakes in spelling are frequently traced to the intrusion of fresh ideas while writing. Psychologists are convinced that these apparent deviations from the normal are at bottom subconscious correctives or supplements.

As intimated above, the subconscious is that vast tract of mental life which is not the material of momentary reflective scrutiny. In the very nature of the case it eludes introspection, and any information of it which we may possess is gained by indirect means. We may reasonably infer that it includes our biases and prejudices, our moods and instincts, our memories and impressions of the past, our habits of appreciation and modes of decision. Some of its elements we welcome when they invade the focus of consciousness; others we tend to repress whenever they assert their presence. Many subconscious accumulations have at one time been the object of awareness, others have glided into the mind without attracting attention. Often impressions sink beneath the level of cognizance only to reappear in transformed shape. It is said that in the European War certain officers began to issue written orders to those subordinates who were

at a distance, because messages transmitted orally from soldier to soldier until they reached the person for whom they were intended were often delivered in garbled or even unrecognizable form.

The relation between the subconscious and conscious mental activity is one of absolute unity and complete continuity. There is no gulf fixed between them. They are not independent of one another. Each influences the other. The one merges into the other. The subconscious is not split off from the main stream of thought and activity. There is no so-called subjective self with an identity and consciousness of its own. Neither is there an objective self having a distinct and separate existence. The subconscious is not an artificer, self-conscious and subject to moments of exaltation and periods of depression of which clear consciousness is ignorant. Far from acting upon its own initiative and responsibility, it is definitely and organically related to a centrally organizing and unitary self. Such forms of mental behavior as hypnosis and multiple personality are not independent selves, but abnormal variants of the one central self. We are not two or more selves, but one self which may, it is true, experience various alterations.

Just what goes on beneath the level of awareness, or just how suggestive ideas are realized, is still largely a matter of speculation. The student should beware lest he impute to the subconscious magical powers it does not possess. It can combine and develop its furnishings only within certain limitations. It is not a factory in which substantial things are made from material elements or forces

having no connection with our ordinary life. Ideas are not substantial and material things. They are a form of mental reaction. Possibly they may be thought of as highly specialized and articulate phases of feeling.

A suggestion is, after all, just what the word implies, namely, a hint, a prompting, a cue which tends to express itself in accordance with the laws of our being. It is tolerably certain that every idea held steadily before the mind inspires belief in its worth and exerts a pressure upon the nervous system. Many experiments prove that even abstract ideas obey the law of motor discharge, reflecting themselves in changes in heart-beat, breathing, digestion, and secretion. As a normal consequence of the structure of the nervous system, the natural outcome of every sensation and idea, of every impulse and mental current, is action. Hints gleaned from various sources indicate that complex suggested ideas, expectantly attended to, occasion a process of subconscious growth in the direction of their realization. Professor Jastrow writes, "There exists in all intellectual endeavor a period of incubation, a process in great part subconscious, a slow, concealed maturing through the absorption of suitable pabulum."[3] And Professor Starbuck says: "After one exerts an effort, the fruition of it is accomplished by the life-forces which act through the personality. It is a well-known law of the nervous system that it 'tends to form itself in accordance with the mode in which it is habitually exercised.' It is only a slight variation on this law to say that the nervous system grows in the direc-

[3] Jastrow, Joseph: *The Subconscious*, p. 99. Houghton Mifflin Company.

tion of the expenditure of effort."[4] These supplementary quotations throw a few grateful rays of light upon the subconscious processes involved in suggestion. Attention as a selective agency determines just which idea shall be held in mental focus. Faith as the challenge of expectation encourages subconscious activities. The interaction of the will and the organic vitality creates the subconscious product.

The element of time is an important factor in the realization of the suggested idea. The length of the period of subconscious incubation varies directly with the difficulty and complexity of the idea. The time also varies with different individuals, for what may be complex and difficult for some may be relatively simple and easy for others. Some suggested ideas realize themselves almost instantly; others require a longer period of time. In response to the suggestion that one is blushing, it is highly probable that the blood will flow to the surface of the face in copious quantities at once. Blushing involves a relatively simple subconscious activity; hence the suggestion is realized almost instantaneously. On the other hand, considerable time may be consumed and repeated stimulation be necessary in the cure of a nervous disease through suggestion. The time required is, then, a variable quantity, being regulated by both the condition of the person and the complexity of the suggested idea.

Effort and relaxation.—Furthermore, it is a common experience that after many seemingly fruitless attempts to realize a difficult suggestion have been

[4] Starbuck, Edwin D.: *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 111. Charles Scribner's Sons.

followed by a period of rest, a fresh effort is attended by astonishing success. For instance, one may make a prolonged and conscientious effort to master the art of typewriting. After a certain degree of skill has been attained one may fail to detect any appreciable progress despite continued effort. If the work is discontinued for a season and then resumed, one may be astonished at the ease with which one now masters the typewriter. During the interval of complete rest two things probably occur. Countless hindering tendencies which are naturally developed through unsuccessful effort disappear during the rest period. The more firmly established associations involving speed and accuracy, however, tend to become the more deeply intrenched. The inhibiting activities, being only slightly drilled in, tend to atrophy during the time of rest, but the correct impressions being sufficiently ingrained grow through the nutrient changes brought about by the action of the blood.[5]

It is quite certain that, in difficult and complex suggestion, an intermission has the same dual effect. On the one hand, it furthers subconscious incubation in the right direction. On the other, it tends to uproot hindering associations built up through misdirected effort. If, in such cases, no temporary release from effort occurs, there is grave danger that the wrong tendencies gain the ascendency over the correct ones, and that the very purpose of the suggestion be defeated. Inability to realize a suggestion beyond a certain point, in spite of repeated stimulation, may be an indication that a respite is needed.

[5] See Book, W. F.: *Psychology of Skill*. University of Montana.

In some cases of suggestion the person comes to feel that further striving can avail nothing; and then, when he becomes inactive, the self-realization of the idea is completed. An analogous occurrence is the recollection of a name after one has ceased all effort to bring it to remembrance. One may try to recall the word "pear" and strain in the direction of the word "peach"; which is the right general direction so far as the first three letters are concerned, but wrong with respect to the last two. Cessation of effort, however, permits the process of association to correct and complete the act of memory.

When the suggested idea has been almost realized beneath the threshold of consciousness, cessation of conscious striving and straining seems to open the way for its emergence. Subconscious development and conscious exertion may be working toward the same general end but from slightly different angles. So long as the two lines of action are not parallel, or the opposition of the conscious endeavor is not withdrawn, the subconscious product cannot be completed. Slightly misdirected activities of the will guard the entrance to consciousness but, when they relax, the subconsciously incubated idea crosses the threshold. Passivity, inactivity, apathy, indifference, and sometimes even despair, accompany the surrender of the will, but when the suggestion is expressed they are replaced by satisfaction, interest, exhilaration, and exaltation. Self-surrender, or cessation of effort, may be regarded as a form of faith. It is passive faith, as contrasted with the active, stimulative faith already considered.

CLASSIFICATION OF SUGGESTION

Suggestion may be classified from an almost indefinite number of approaches. Thus far, only normal suggestion has engaged our attention, because with the abnormal form we shall have but little to do. Abnormal suggestibility characterizes hypnotism, and this mental state will receive only incidental reference. Our interest centers in the normal, regular, ordinary, and waking mental state in which suggestion is a natural and common occurrence. All normal suggestions may be divided into social and autosuggestions, and these, in turn, may be subdivided into positive and negative, and intentional and unintentional varieties. Further sifting would doubtless disclose additional kinds, but those indicated will serve the present purposes.

Social and autosuggestion.—A social suggestion has its source indirectly in a volitional pressure exerted by another self. In autosuggestion the idea is self-imposed, the field of consciousness being restricted on one's own initiative. That a social suggestion arises from without and an autosuggestion from within is a distinction that must not, however, be pressed too hard, for in autosuggestion, the prompting may be merely immediately internal. More remotely, it may have been external. Often the difference is simply one in the degree of mental elaboration which a suggested idea undergoes before it is realized. When an idea suggested by another person is but slightly elaborated in the mind before it is expressed, we may speak of a social suggestion; but when an idea

is considerably modified before it is expressed, we may call it an autosuggestion. In a sense, every social suggestion to become effective must become autosuggestion. An idea, introduced into the mind by an external will, may be so modified by the sentiments and instincts, biases and prejudices it encounters, by the associations and emotions it arouses, that it loses its original force and character. Every suggestion becomes more or less tinged with the mental states of the self in which it is efficacious. Hence it is not always possible to determine absolutely whether one is having to do with a social or an autosuggestion.

Positive and negative suggestion.—From the point of view of form, all suggestions may be divided into two classes—the positive and the negative. The object of the positive suggestion is the creation of something new, something which the self is eager to obtain. The negative suggestion is in terms of what one wishes to rid the self of or to avoid. The former is constructive, the latter destructive. If a child, who is afraid of certain unpleasant dreams that have a tendency to recur, at bedtime suggests to himself that he will have delightful dreams, like those of success at play or the bestowal of gifts upon himself, he is making a positive suggestion. But he is engaged in making negative suggestions when he suggests to himself that he will not dream horrible dreams, like those of being attacked by wild beasts. As he passes in mental review the dreaded nocturnal visitations, he heightens the probability of their recurrence. Since whatever is persistently held in mental focus tends to generate belief in its reality, the

positive suggestion is on the whole the more efficacious.

A negative suggestion is sometimes ineffective because the mind is in a state of confusion. The consciousness of facing a dilemma imperils its effectiveness. Who has not been tormented by misspelled or mispronounced words? When there is an occasion to make use of them, there is, at least momentarily, confusion as to their correct spelling or pronunciation. Ideas of abnormalities sometimes tend to become embarrassingly prominent in the mind. If one suggest to a maiden that she shall not blush, her face is likely to become crimson. One method of remembering is trying to forget. Because it expresses repression, denial, refusal, and negation, the adverb, "not" is the most uninteresting and unattractive word in the English language; hence it tends to evaporate from prohibitions. Some minds are so organized that a restraint assumes the form and force of a challenge, of defiance.

Nevertheless, one should not be in hot haste to conclude that negative suggestions are invariably futile. The contrary is often true. But when they are effective the outcome may be traceable to the fact that they serve to purge an otherwise wholesome personality of unwholesome elements. It is well known that emotional and ideational expression tends to liberate certain distressing states of mind. A common method of obtaining mental relief is to get a troublesome element "off the mind," or "out of the system." "Confession is good for the soul," is a psychologically justifiable adage. Unless channels are opened for the effectual discharge of festering mental conditions, serious disturbances of the

mind are likely to obtain. We shall have occasion to examine the psychological basis of this unique process when we study devotional prayer.

Intentional and unintentional suggestion.—With reference to the individual's knowledge of its presence, suggestion may be divided into two additional classes—the intentional and the unintentional. An intentional suggestion is deliberately made with the knowledge that the principles of suggestion are being applied with a specific end in view. A case in point would be the conscious and circumspect use of autosuggestion for the purpose of inducing pleasant dreams. But when a child, blissfully ignorant of the theory and first principles of autosuggestion, which he nevertheless applies in seeking undisturbed repose, attributes the result to the influence of an extraneous agency, such as a guardian angel, we have to do with unintentional suggestion. We are constantly giving and receiving suggestions unintentionally the effect of which it would be impossible to measure.

It is evident that since whatever is unintentionally done is accomplished with great ease and effect, unintentional suggestion is the more efficacious. Note the vast difference between intentional and unintentional imitation! How crude and imperfect the former, how perfect and easily accomplished the latter! In fact, imitation may be defined as a form of social suggestion which reinstates a copy. Professor Jastrow says that he can readily adjust a certain kind of necktie if he does not consciously attempt the adjustment, that if he begins to reason which end goes under and which over and observes his movements in a mirror a hopeless failure is the

probable issue.[6] Professor Baldwin reports that it is impossible for him to induce a state of drowsiness by imagining himself asleep. The first effort leads to a state of restfulness only to be succeeded by a condition of steady wakefulness, which is intensified by an increasing consciousness of self.[7] Another case in point is the frantic effort of one learning to ride a bicycle to preserve his balance and to avoid obstacles in the way. Overguidance by the conscious powers has a tendency to make the manipulation of the delicate mechanism of suggestion awkward and inefficient.

Unintentional suggestion is relatively frictionless, employing the automatic processes which yield maximum returns for the effort expended. A physician relates that one winter night in his hotel room he became unpleasantly aware of the need of ventilation. Raising one window from below and lowering another from above, he soon was conscious of a refreshing circulation. Experiencing a positive sense of exhilaration, he retired for the night in the same room. The following morning he was amazed to find that all the windows of the room were reenforced by storm-windows, which did not admit a breath of air, regardless of the open inside windows. Imagine the difficulty, but not the impossibility, of intentionally obtaining the same result.

THE INFLUENCE OF SUGGESTION

Suggestion has power to affect every variety of mental activity. It would be difficult to exhaust

[6] Jastrow, Joseph: *The Subconscious*, p. 30. Houghton Mifflin Company.
[7] Baldwin, James M.: *Mental Development in the Child and the Race*, p. 139. The Macmillan Company.

its possibilities, for it influences the whole gamut of personal experience. No person can wholly escape its effects, for all men are more or less suggestible. The state of normal suggestibility is not a pathological condition, unless the person has lost self-control and is at the mercy of external forces impinging upon the mind. Man is educable largely because he is suggestible. It would be hard to overestimate the value of suggestion as a factor in social progress.[8]

The threefold effect of suggestion.—Suggestion modifies the self in three ways—by inhibiting, inducing, and heightening states. It often inhibits, suppresses, checks mental states. In the hypnotic state, suggestions that the subject is powerless to move an arm or to see an object actually present, and many others of a similar inhibitory character, are frequently realized. Normal suggestion of this type is especially effective in affording relief from pain. The mother kisses and laughs away the aches of her child. The mind healer banishes physical torment. From the above description of negative suggestion it will be clear that the most effective method of inhibiting states is to let the mind function in the opposite direction, to eliminate by substitution, to close one set of channels by opening another. The cultivation of objective-mindedness will eradicate bashfulness, love will cast out fear.

Suggestion has the power to induce an almost endless variety of mental products. Looking at the full moon shining in a clear sky, one may dis-

[8] See Noble, E.: "Suggestion as a Factor in Social Progress," *International Journal of Ethics*, 1898, p. 214ff.

cern almost anything the notion of which is imposed upon the mind—an illuminated fissure-riven surface, the front view of a fat man's smiling face, a woman's profile half-hidden by her tresses. Mr. Maurice H. Small, making an experimental study of the suggestibility of children, found that many of his subjects in response to suggestion experienced an illusion of perfume, although only water was sprayed from an atomizer; an illusion of the taste of salt, sugar, and quinine, although only pure distilled water was given; an illusion of the movement of a cast-iron camel which really remained stationary; an illusion of heat, although no hot stimulus was applied; an illusion of itching and tickling, although the skin was not touched.[9]

A student was an eyewitness of a case of suggestion that involved the removal of the isinglass of a stove in a village store by a group of practical jokers, and the substitution of red glazed paper that gave the appearance, to a superficial observer, of a comfortable fire although there was none. Several customers, coming into the store from the cold without, approached the fireless stove with outstretched hands, and gave every sign of absorbing heat. It is evident that the possibilities of affecting the self by inducing states are legion.

Again, mental states already present may be heightened. Such activities as perception, memory, reasoning, and action may be augmented by suggestion. Memory is strengthened when one makes the self-suggestion that he will recollect the data with which the mind is being charged. An otherwise impossible action, such as the lifting of a

[9] *The Suggestibility of Children*, Pedagogical Seminary, 1896, p. 176ff.

heavy weight, may be accomplished as the result of the idea that it can be done. Increase in pulse rate occasioned by the self-consciousness of the patient often frustrates the attempt of a physician to determine the real condition of the heart. Professor Coe refers to a small boy, mildly affected with asthma, who invariably returned home from a visit to his grandmother with his malady perceptibly aggravated. She would say, "Come here, child, and let me hear you breathe!" The exclamations and coddling which followed made him worse.[10] These simple illustrations indicate the manifold operations and ramifications of suggestion.

The province of suggestion.—In an exuberant appreciation of the possibilities of suggestion, it is well to remember that it is not omnipotent. There are limitations which it cannot transcend. Its direct influence is circumscribed by the immovable boundaries of the mental life. Its limitations are twofold. In the first place, its direct effect is restricted to personal influence. In the second place, within the sphere of mental activity, it is furthermore limited by the amount of vitality which the human organism possesses. Since suggestion is not effective outside the scope of personal influence, one is certain to be disappointed if one throws a stone into the air with the expectation that it be suspended in midair. To be sure, one might be positive that the stone was behaving in that extraordinary manner; but this would be an hallucination, a false subjective experience. No amount of suggestion can bring the mountain to Mohammed. The most that it can do is to

[10] Coe, G. A.: *The Spiritual Life*, p. 160. The Methodist Book Concern.

bring Mohammed to the mountain. Suggestion, it is true, has an indirect influence on inanimate objects by affecting the human agent acting upon them. Its control over what is other than mental is of necessity indirect and through a self.

On the other hand, only when there is an adequate degree of force resident within the organism can the suggested idea be realized. It is possible to overestimate the potency of the organic processes and thereby fail to induce the expected reaction. When disease has lowered the vitality of the human organism below a certain degree, the life forces are too weak to realize the idea of health, be it ever so persistently held in mind and relied upon by the patient. It would be impossible for a man to lift a ton by sheer strength of arm in response to the suggestion that he is equal to the Herculean feat. Life is too short and the organic processes too feeble to realize some suggested ideas. The subconscious is not an inexhaustible reservoir of superhuman energy. Suggestion is effective only when it lies within the range of the mental life and when the personality possesses vitality enough to realize it.

Real and imaginary results.—It is clear from the foregoing examples that sometimes the products of suggestion are imaginary and illusory, and sometimes actual and real. The distinction must not be pressed too hard. The ordinary distinction between fact and fancy indicates in a practical manner the line of cleavage. For the purposes of classification one may legitimately refer, on the one hand, as imaginary, to the realization of the idea suggested to a hypnotized person that he sees a serpent

when there is none present and, on the other, as real, to the elimination of moral evil by the expulsive power of suggestion.

It is shortsighted to undervalue the actual results as well as the imaginary effects of suggestion. To regard all achievements of suggestion as equally evanescent and illusory is to entertain a perilous and false notion of the operations of the mind. The real accomplishments of suggestion are as perceptible, as legitimate, and as serviceable as those from any other source.

Thinking back over the salient points of this chapter, we conclude that a suggestion unintentionally made, positive in content, engendering faith in its own worth, and falling within the range of subconscious influence is the suggestion of highest efficiency and value.

POINTS OF CONTACT WITH PRAYER

It is not hard to discover elements common to suggestion and prayer. Both involve a mental impression. Both are said to depend for success in large measure upon concentration of the mind and faith. Not unlike a social suggestion, a prayer offered by one person may impress itself upon the mind of another, pass through a series of modifications, and issue in personal petitions. The time spent in subconsciously expressing a suggested idea and the time required to answer a prayer is in either case a variable quantity. Prayer may be either personal or social, and positive or negative in form.

Does petitional prayer appropriate the technic and mechanism of suggestion? Are their spheres

of influence coextensive? Can unanswered petitions be described as failures of suggestion? How does prayer differ from suggestion? To answer these and similar questions is the purpose of the six following chapters. Accordingly, we shall examine the elements which make prayer a mental pressure, the factors which induce faith in its efficacy, the answer itself, and finally the unanswered petition. To anticipate, suggestion in prayer is a mental process which the religious impulse originates and uses as a means to an end. It is not an entity in itself having self-existence, but in prayer it is dependent upon the creativeness of the religious nature of man. It is an instrument which is produced and employed.

CHAPTER III

ATTENTION IN PRAYER

In symbols peculiar to himself Luther once said, "Just as a good, clever barber must have his eyes and mind upon the beard and razor, so as to mark distinctly where he is to shave, so everything, which is to be done well, ought to occupy the whole man, with all his faculties and members. How much more, then, should prayer, if intended to be effective, engage the heart wholly and without distraction."[1] All writers of devotional literature agree with Luther that a vital element in effectual prayer is the concentration of the mind. We are told that one difference between genuine praying and the mere saying of prayers is attention to, and interest in, the exercise. In other words, the devotional man insists that in order to be efficacious the prayer must be impressed upon the mind. In this particular he does not differ from the psychologist who recognizes in the introduction of an idea into the mind an essential of suggestion.

ACCESSORIES TO ATTENTION

During the course of the natural history of religion many elements have appeared or have been adopted which tend to direct the stream of the mental life into the channel of prayer. The

[1] Morris, J. G.: *Quaint Sayings and Doings of Luther*, p. 131. The United Lutheran Publishing House.

reference is to such means of attracting and holding the attention as the isolation of the individual or the presence of other prayerful persons, the posture of the body, the suspension of vision, motor automatism, emotional states, prayer repetitions, the activity of the will, praying at night, and mechanical devices. Let us now see how these accessories help to implant the material of prayer in the mind.

Privacy in prayer.—The very expression "private prayer" is suggestive of the isolation of the person. Of the respondents who answered the question contained in the questionnaire on prayer circulated by the writer, "Which do you find the more effective: public prayer by either the minister or the congregation, or private prayer?" seventy per cent favored private prayer. John R. Mott says, "In a word, secret prayer is prayer at its best. It is prayer most free from all insincerity. It is the true gauge of our prayer life."[2] Jesus both taught and practiced privacy in prayer. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."[3] "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."[4]

It is a truism that the isolation of the individual guards against distractions. Novel impressions, strange changes in the environment, and interruptions by others attract the attention. Alone and free from social restraints, the person is at

[2] *The Secret Prayer Life*, p. 5. Y. M. C. A.
[3] Matthew 6: 6.
[4] Luke 6: 12.

liberty to give his undivided attention to the unreserved expression of religious needs and desires. In this negative way, privacy is an aid to prayer.

Social praying.—It goes without saying that prayer offered either by the minister in the pulpit or by the congregation, except when it induces negative suggestions, exerts a stimulating influence. It is the purpose of the pastoral prayer to express common wants and aspirations of the congregation, to reduce all minds to an attitude of worship, to induce in all a prayerful mood. The ideal pulpit prayer reflects the sensitivity of its maker to the religious life of the people, arrests the attention of the indifferent, finds a lodgment in their minds, and bears the fruit of peace and moral power.

The prayer meeting and other social forms of religious exercise manifest the same positive tendency to induce a prayerful response. These gatherings afford the laity an opportunity to offer their common supplications for the edification of the saints, the conversion of the sinful, and the relief of the distressed. It is self-evident that when such a variety of social interactions occurs, the prayer not only reacts upon its author but also impinges upon other minds. The following quotation admirably expresses, in devotional terminology, the value of the prayer circle, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."[5]

Physical posture.—Having found some secluded spot, or being in a church where the custom is observed, the person may reverently kneel in prayer. Many seem to have a native impulse to cast them-

[5] Matthew 18: 20.

selves at the feet of God in humble submission, or to assume another bodily attitude which has significance for the prayer life. A respondent to a questionnaire sent out by Dr. F. O. Beck says, "Frequently walking is most effective. Kneeling is probably more habitual in times of relaxing; walking, when any intense personal problems are to be worked out. In morning, sitting or walking is perhaps more indulged in; at evening, kneeling."[6]

The following is a specimen of the various and uncomfortable positions assumed by the members of the Yoga cult of India: "The right foot should be placed on the left thigh, and the left foot on the right thigh; the hands should be crossed, and the two great toes should be firmly held thereby; the chin should be bent down on the chest, and in this posture the eyes should be directed to the tip of the nose."[7] This position is called Padmasana, lotus-seat, and is highly recommended as a cure for all diseases. The student of hypnotism can readily understand how such a posture combined with restraints of breathing produces such a state of abstraction that the person is rendered indifferent to pain and pleasure, hunger and thirst, cold and heat. It is an extreme method of self-hypnotization.

Forty per cent of the respondents to our questionnaire answered the following question in the affirmative: "Do you find that posture, such as kneeling, etc., has any influence on your state of mind in prayer?" The following statements imply

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[6] "Prayer: a Study in its History and Psychology," *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, vol. ii, p. 117.

[7] Müller, F. Max: *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 457. Longmans, Green & Co.

that an appreciation of the incompleteness of the personal life induces such a physical attitude: "It [kneeling] is a sign of humility." "Whenever I am burdened with the cares of life I feel an almost irresistible desire to fall upon my knees in prayer."

On the other hand, kneeling may be suggestive of a want. Who has not been impressed by the fact that whenever he has had occasion to kneel, be the situation ever so foreign to prayer, he has invariably been reminded of prayer? One writes, "Kneeling makes one more earnest in prayer." Kneeling and prayer are so closely associated that the one tends to induce the other. Many religious leaders understand the reaction of bodily positions upon the mental states; hence a special evangelistic appeal is frequently followed by an exhortation that all kneel while prayer is being offered.

Any bodily posture which has become habitually linked with a particular mental activity, naturally resists any proposed departure from its well-established course. When a position other than the habitual one is assumed, doubts as to its propriety arise. These divert the attention from the act of prayer to the bodily posture. To say that posture is a matter of indifference is to overlook the fact that in order to make its greatest contribution to the prayer life the bodily attitude should be expressive of the devotional temper.

Suspending the vision.—The extent of the practice of closing or covering the eyes in prayer may be inferred from the fact that seventy-five per cent of the answers to the questionnaire confess that vision is suspended during prayer. The following typical reasons for doing so seem commonplace:

"The closing of the eyes shuts out distracting sights." "To concentrate my thoughts." It is self-evident that an interesting environment might provide impressions novel enough to tempt the attention. The practice is not peculiar to prayer, for we often see persons with closed eyes engaged in strenuous mental effort. Possibly the downcast eyes are also an outward sign of an inward devotional mood.

It is well known that moving stimuli fascinate the attention. During the early stages of evolution movement suggested to the mind of primitive man the presence of either benevolent or malevolent beings. Hence the resulting oscillation between fear and desire until the nature of the stimulus could be determined. Perhaps it is a heritage from the remote past that makes us still sensitive to movement occurring even in familiar or monotonous environments.[8] A horse will start suddenly aside at the sight of a flying sheet of paper. Although we fail to notice the usual and familiar distractions of the city street, how quickly we attend to the advertisement consisting of electric lights that come and go. When we wish to attract the attention of another at a distance we reenforce our vocal efforts with suggestive motions of the arms. The contribution to the prayer experience of the simple expedient of suspended vision is obvious.

Automatic movements.—When the person is engaged in the act of prayer, a variety of physical activities appear of which he is unconscious or but vaguely conscious. The reference is to such physical accompaniments of prayer as the swaying or twist-

[8] See Pillsbury, W. B.: *Attention*, p. 50ff. The Macmillan Company.

ing of the body, the clasping or clinching of the hands, the scratching of the head or the pulling of the hair, the closing or rolling of the eyes, the wrinkling of the forehead and the distorting of the face, and the moving of the lips, jaws, tongue, head. Such motor phenomena are often called automatism. They increase in number with the seriousness of the mental activity. Professor E. H. Lindley detects as many as one hundred and thirty-six distinct automatisms in such varieties of mental effort as serious study, attention, and difficult recollection.

Their function is twofold. In the first place, they are "accessory to the mechanism of attention. In order that mental activity may be brought to its maximum, and kept there during a period of work, the circulation of the brain must be rendered adequate, and the latent energy of the nerve-cells must be aroused. To aid in accomplishing this, many movements have appeared in the race and in the individual. Their sole *raison d'être* seems to be that they facilitate the work of the brain."[9]

A secondary function of the automatism is to provide an outlet for irrelevant impressions which may be courting the attention. Impressions foreign to the task in hand may be discharged through the channels opened by the automatism. At first the automatisms aid in increasing cerebral excitation, under which favorable condition the state of attention waxes in intensity. The nerve paths of the automatism likewise become a way of escape for all currents of an excitatory and intruding nature which are excluded from the brain during attention.

[9] Lindley, E. H.: "Motor Phenomena of Mental Effort," *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. vii, p. 512.

Evidently, the automatisms accompanying prayer have both a stimulating and a conserving effect. Heightening the circulation of the blood, thus setting free latent nervous energy, they are instrumental in generating vitality for the deepening of the prayer life. Supporting the mechanism of attention, they help to impose the prayer upon the mind. Then they tend to conserve the energy which they have released. Extraneous impressions which solicit the attention, following the line of least resistance, find expression through the functional avenues opened by the automatism. We shall have abundant occasion to make further reference to this unique mental process when we consider the repetition of prayer and the rosary.

Emotion.—The devotional state is essentially emotional. Effort of the will fortified by reason may initiate a prayer, but more often it is the emotions that give rise to prayer and determine the activity of the will. The intense prayer experience is charged with a high potential of emotion. Situations or predicaments which evoke such emotions as fear, love, exaltation, guilt, doubt, anxiety, gratitude are pregnant with prayer possibilities.

It is the emotions which tend to sweep one from one's rational feet and to prostrate the self before a higher power. Religion is the refuge of the emotion-tossed; devotional literature encourages prayer in critical situations. "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me,"[10] is the invitation of the psalmist speaking in Jehovah's stead. The value of the emotional

[10] Psalm 50: 15.

states for the prayer life is admirably expressed in the following quotation taken from a devotional study: "Devotion should spring up spontaneously from an emotive state. . . . Christians, whose lives, in other respects, are not visibly defective . . . have no deep subsoil of feeling from which prayer would be a natural growth. . . . Our theory of the Christian life is that of a clear, erect, inflexible head, not of a great heart in which deep calleth unto deep."[11]

When the emotions control the personality, judgment and reason are held in abeyance, and the person is in a condition of extreme suggestibility. Emotions tend to narrow the field of consciousness. Corrective elements and wider considerations are ignored when an intense emotion dominates the self. Fear of an unpleasant experience often brings about the dreaded occurrence. Fear of failure has too often paralyzed the efforts of conscientious and capable students in examination. When one is in the grip of fear's antipode, love, the confidence and assurance which this emotion begets renders the personality amenable to glorified conceptions of the object of affection. It is common for a lover to be so obsessed of his passion that he is rendered indifferent to other matters of importance.

It is clear that when the emotion is connected with the religious life the state is auspicious for the introduction of prayer ideas into the mind. The dangers attending an excess of religious emotion are too well known to require mention here. From this standpoint emotions evoke prayers, but it is equally true that prayers themselves in many cases arouse the emotions. There is, in fact, an

[11] Phelps, A.; *The Still Hour*, p. 58. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co.

interaction between the emotive states and the prayer ideas and ideals, the one stimulating the other. In a following discussion the part which prayer plays in inducing the emotions will receive attention.

Oral praying.—The vocalization of the prayer is itself a means of attracting and holding the attention. Saint Teresa says that the first step in a graduated series of religious exercises ending in ecstasy is the articulation of the prayer. Ribot maintains that the vocalization of the prayer leads "the dispersed consciousness into a single confined channel."[12] Experience teaches that the habit of reading not merely with the eye, but of actually articulating the words seen deepens the attention to the contents of the printed page. Speech is the organ of reason. A spoken dream is likely to be more connected than the one not articulated. It is conceivable that the constitution of some minds is such that failure to clothe the prayer in words as soon as it arises in consciousness nullifies the devotional attitude.

Shifting of attention.—During an act of prayer, the object of interest or of desire must be considered from various points of view. Otherwise, attention will wander elsewhere. There can be no sustained attention to anything unless different aspects and relations are taken into account in rapid succession. Attention can be held strictly to a simple and single thing for less than a second. Doubtless the laws of association determine the angles from which the circumstances giving rise to prayer are viewed, for

[12] Ribot, T.: *The Psychology of Attention*, p. 92. The Open Court Publishing Company.

the consideration of one detail of a subject naturally leads to that of another. As the attention flits from one aspect of prayer to another, the emotions are aroused. "One may get angrier in thinking over one's insult than at the moment of receiving it."[13] Viewing the insult from various sides may reveal the offensive character of the affront and arouse a veritable storm of emotion. Likewise, with each consideration of the incomplete self from a fresh standpoint, the prayer experience waxes in emotional intensity. In this way, prayer, begun with but a feeble emotional accompaniment, begets a rich emotional excitation. We have already seen that emotional states as a rule control the attention. Ribot insists that "at the root of attention we find only emotional states."[14]

The law of inertia.—Now, when once the mechanism of attention is accommodated to any stimulus, it offers a certain resistance to an impression calling for a fresh adjustment. Change of occupation means a corresponding adjustment of the physical mechanism to be employed. For this reason a diligent student at work may find himself loath to interrupt his studies. The resistance of the adjusted mechanism to change is known as the law of inertia. Applying this principle to the devotional life, we can readily see that when the mechanism of attention has been adjusted to the prayer experience, the person, following the line of least resistance, may feel a tendency to repeat the

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[13] James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. ii, p. 443. Henry Holt & Co. To be sure, the contrary is often true: a calm consideration of an insult may convince one that in view of its inconsequential source it is really beneath one's dignity.

[14] *The Psychology of Attention*, p. 35. The Open Court Publishing Company.

petition rather than to discontinue it and engage in some other activity. To turn the attention to another thing would, under religious pressure and no special distractions, necessitate a decided effort.

The turning of the prayer into a definite channel opened by articulation, the frequent change in the point of view by which attention is held and emotions aroused, the making of automatic movements generating energy and releasing distractions, the warding-off of foreign impressions by the adjusted psycho-physical mechanism, have a collective and cumulative effect which is positively significant for the reiteration of the prayer and its impression upon the mind. Like the little snowball rolling down the mountainside and gathering volume and force until it becomes the mighty avalanche, the prayer born of a feeble appreciation of incompleteness and repeating itself may become an experience so intense that all competitors for the attention are driven from the field, and it, alone, dominates the personality.

Praying at night.—If a summons of the will be a difficult method of impressing the mind with prayer material, the widespread habit of praying at night just before retiring is perhaps the easiest way in which petitions may be introduced into consciousness. A state of high suggestibility is induced by approaching sleep. When an individual feels inclined to sleep, his mind is unusually sensitive and responsive to suggestion. When one is drowsy and ready to retire, the mind is at least partially freed from the criteria of the material world. The critical and corrective powers are held in abeyance. Any reference to objective standards becomes in-

creasingly difficult. Educators are recommending the giving of suggestions to children at bedtime in order to correct mental and moral defects. During the daytime, especially during the morning when the mind is alert, the waking consciousness acts as censor of the ideas that come to its notice, often rejecting and combating what would have been accepted at night. Apart from the high degree of suggestibility which obtains at bedtime, the privacy of one's room, and the opportunity to assume the habitual devotional posture and to continue the prayer at will, are elements which conspire to hold the prayer in mental focus.

The rosary.—Of all mechanical devices designed to increase the effectiveness of the prayer life none is more unique or important than the rosary. Although Buddhists and Mohammedans have adopted this devotional mechanism, it is found in its most highly developed form among Roman Catholics. It will therefore suffice to note the history, use, and psychological value of the Catholic rosary.

On Roman Catholic authority it is alleged that in the period of religious indifference which obtained in France during the thirteenth century the Virgin appeared in a vision to Saint Dominic, a Spaniard, with a rosary in her hand. She instructed him in the use of this device and enjoined upon him the mission of preaching it as a means of spiritual revival. Arriving at Toulouse for the purpose of proclaiming the new devotion, he found that in response to a mysterious summons the people had already assembled in the church. At first his preachment fell upon unheeding ears, but when a violent storm arose with flashes of lightning and

crashes of thunder, and the statue of the Virgin began to move, even pointing to heaven and to the preacher, the obdurate people were touched, and casting themselves at the feet of Saint Dominic, they announced their acceptance of the rosary. The faithful followers of Saint Dominic carried the rosary into all the countries of Europe, and it was quite generally adopted. It is affirmed that its general adoption was followed by a widespread religious awakening, more than a hundred thousand souls in France alone returning to the fold of the church.

This account of the miraculous origin of the rosary is, of course, purely legendary. Careful students of rites and religious practices, like Tylor, affirm that it is an Asiatic invention, having its special development, if not its origin, among the ancient Buddhists. Among the modern Buddhists, its one hundred and eight balls still measure out the sacred formulas, the reiteration of which consumes the major part of a pious life. Toward the Middle Ages the rosary found its way into Christian and Mohammedan lands where, adapting itself to existing conceptions of prayer, it has flourished ever since.[15] The Roman Catholic Church grants indulgences proportionate to the faithfulness of her adherents in the use of the rosary.

The use of the rosary consists of a union of vocal and mental prayers. The entire rosary is composed of fifteen decades of Hail Marys to be orally recited, each decade or group of ten Aves, being preceded by a Pater Noster and followed by a Gloria, and

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[15] See Tylor, E. B.: *Primitive Culture*, vol. ii., p. 372. Henry Holt & Co.

accompanied by the meditation of a "mystery." Five decades constitute a chaplet. During the recitation of each chaplet a group of five "mysteries" from the life of Christ and the Virgin is meditated. Corresponding to the number of chaplets, there are three groups of "mysteries" of five each: the Joyful Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries, the Glorious Mysteries. The Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth, the Presentation, the Finding in the Temple, compose the first group and are called the Joyful Mysteries. The Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion, make up the second group, the Sorrowful Mysteries. The Resurrection, the Ascension, the Coming of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption, the Coronation of the Virgin, comprise the third series known as the Glorious Mysteries. The contemplation of a "mystery" is undertaken in connection with the vocalization of a Pater Noster, ten Hail Marys, and the Gloria.

Let us observe a devotee at church. The windows with their masterpieces of sacred art, the statuary of Jesus, the Virgin and the saints, the soft and restful light of the candles, the chanting and droning of the officiating priests, the odor of incense,[16] the genuflections and responses of the worshiping congregation, all tend to create within him a devotional mood. On bended knee the prayers of the rosary are begun. Let us assume

[16] The power of odor to stimulate the associations, the imagination and memory is without a peer. When Esther, the heroine of *The Children of the Ghetto* (The Macmillan Company, by Zangwill, I.), returns to her old home after an absence of several years, "the unchanging musty smells that clung to the staircase flew to greet her nostrils, and at once a host of sleeping memories started to life, besieging her and pressing upon her on every side."

that while the automatic oral repetition of the stereotyped prayers occurs, the Scourging at the Pillar is the "mystery" meditated. "The memory presents a large hall full of rude soldiers, who drag in a poor prisoner, pull off his garments, bind Him to a pillar, and there tear off the flesh from His bones until His body is all raw and covered with wounds and His blood streaming over the floor. Next the understanding considers who this prisoner is: the adorable Son of the Most High God, the Lord and Giver of Life. And why does He suffer? For miserable sinners: for us ungrateful men: for those who are scourging Him. Now the will is influenced to make acts of compassion, love, adoration, thanksgiving, petition, etc."[17]

In the light of the foregoing discussion of the motor accompaniments of mental effort the psychological value of the rosary is obvious. Like all automatism, the automatic recitation of the rosary arouses mental activity and provides an outlet for distracting impressions. Furthermore, the oral prayers of the rosary are gentle reminders of the religious life. The associations clustered about them are of such an intimate and sacred nature that the suppliant cannot but respond to their subtle influence.

The result would by no means be the same if for the Aves, the Pater Nosters, and the Glorias a substitution without religious significance were attempted—say a group of nonsense syllables, the alphabet and a mother-goose rime. Such a meaningless procedure would rob the exercise of its appropriate suggestiveness. It would be difficult, if

[17] Dominican Father, *The Rosary*, p. 41. Benziger Bros.

not utterly impossible, to meditate a "mystery" to such an incongruous accompaniment. As it is, the rosary, when properly employed, may be an admirable device for attracting and holding the attention to the prayer life. The contemplation of the "mysteries" gives rise to mental pictures out of which there may be constructed prayers expressive of personal needs and devotion to God. Its stimulative value has made the rosary an almost indispensable devotion of the religious recluse whose life is too uneventful to make petitional prayer spontaneous. Its misuse will be considered under the head of "vain repetitions" in a chapter dealing with unanswered petitions.

The will.—According to devotional treatises, it sometimes requires the exercise of the will to bring the faculties to bear upon prayer. This may be true when the course of life is unbroken by crises of religious value, which naturally engender prayer, and the offering of prayer is conscientiously considered a duty to be sacredly discharged or a privilege not to be lightly esteemed. In such a case attention to prayer is voluntary; an effort is made to concentrate the mind. The voluntary overcoming of the capricious wandering of the attention seems to impart to the mind such a powerful stimulus that a generous amount of energy is set free for the making of a prayer. Who has not by an act of the will turned his attention away from the distractions incident to travel by rail, and focused it upon his book in the reading of which he was soon absorbed?

Concerning wandering thoughts and how to recall them, Brother Lawrence has the following to say:

"Our mind is extremely roving; but, as the will is the mistress of all our faculties, she must recall them, and carry them to God as their last end. When the mind for want of being sufficiently reduced by recollection at our first engaging in devotion, has contracted certain bad habits of wandering and dissipation, they are difficult to overcome, and commonly draw us, even against our wills, to the things of the earth. I believe one remedy for this is to confess our faults and to humble ourselves before God. I do not advise you to use multiplicity of words in prayer, many words and long discourses being often the occasion of wandering. Hold yourself in prayer before God like a dumb or paralytic beggar at a rich man's gate. Let it be your business to keep your mind in the presence of the Lord. If it sometimes wanders and withdraws itself from him, do not much disquiet yourself for that: trouble and disquiet serve rather to distract the mind than to recollect it; the will must bring it back in tranquillity."[18]

THE FUNCTION AND NATURE OF ATTENTION

In making a comprehensive survey of the facts which conspire to restrict the field of consciousness to the act of prayer only incidental reference has been made to the purpose and character of attention. Why not let the attention wander where it may in our devotional life? What is the nature of attention? The answering of these questions will disclose both the importance of lodging the prayer in the mind and an elemental activity of the will.

[18] Brother Lawrence: *The Practice of the Presence of God*, p. 35. American Baptist Publishing Society.

The function of attention in prayer.—Since it is impossible consciously to react to all impressions made upon us, we are compelled to make a selection. Attention is the selective process which makes some things prominent and neglects others. Attention is not creative; it does not call ideas into existence. It merely sifts the ideas already present in the mind. Their presence is determined by the operation of the laws of association, according to which contrasting ideas such as day and night exhibit a readiness to recall one another, as do similar ideas such as water and pond, and ideas connected with the same time or place. Attention is prompted by interest. We select for scrutiny and deliberate expression those ideas which we consider of importance. The consequence of attention is interpretation and meaning. Interest arouses attention, attention results in the understanding and appreciation of an idea and indicates lines of activity.

Attention to prayer is born of religious interest. The prayer occupies the focal point of consciousness because it is at the time of more importance to the petitioner than its competitors for recognition. Attention does not originate the petition, but, impelled by religious concern, it makes prayer prominent and ignores matters of lesser consequence. As a result, the religious need is defined, clarified, and formulated. The petition becomes vivid and urgent, dominant and preeminent, and generates an emotional tone which intensifies the desire for religious satisfaction.

Voluntary attention.—The element of self-determination may be detected in voluntary attention.

Heredity and environment cannot explain away the strain of free will manifested in the effort to restrict or otherwise control the field of consciousness. Voluntary attention is elemental, it cannot be reduced to other and lower terms. To quote the ever-poignant James, "Effort of attention is thus the essential phenomenon of will."[19] Another writer has a word to the point: "The will reveals itself most directly in attention. It is often said sweepingly that a man's environment makes him. Not to insist upon the obvious fact that there must be a germ with a certain nature in order that any environment may work its effect, it is particularly important to notice in the case of man that not his entire environment, but only that part of his environment to which he attends really makes him."[20]

Man has the innate power to attend or not to attend to prayer ideas. Without attention, the laws governing prayer cannot operate. Professor B. P. Bowne has well said: "Human purpose and volition are perpetually playing into the system of law, thereby realizing a multitude of effects which the system, left to itself, would never produce, yet in such a way that no law is broken. Natural law of itself would never do any of the things which men are doing by means of it. The work of the world is done by natural forces under human guidance. It is the outcome at once of law and purpose."[21]

Choice involves the presence of two or more ideas in the mind, and the focusing of the attention

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[19] James, William: *Principles of Psychology*, vol. ii, p. 562. Henry Holt & Co.
[20] King, H. C.: *Rational Living*, p. 159. The Macmillan Company.
[21] Bowne, B. P.: *The Essence of Religion*, p. 136. Houghton Mifflin Company.

upon one of them. When man by an act of his own volition attends to certain objects of prayer, the realization of which affects himself and others, he is exercising his power of self-determination. The extent of his initiative and creativeness depends upon the number of associations which he possesses. The range of ideas from which a selection is possible is the measure of freedom. The highest form of will is revealed in attention to an idea, the acceptance of which is urged by conscience in the face of an opposing current public opinion.

In view of the fact that an act of the will may apply the principles which underlie prayer, it is puerile to raise the questions: Why must we pray at all? If a divine Intelligence broods over us and knows our every want long before we can formulate it, of what use is prayer? Prayer is not a dumb-waiter bringing down from heaven gifts ready-made for those who are too indolent to exert themselves. *It would be no more irrational to expect to reap a harvest without sowing or to live without eating than it would be to demand that God grant religious enthusiasm and moral power to an inactive and passive personality.* Man is, then, morally responsible because, on his own initiative, he may make operative the laws which determine his character.

SUMMARY

Religion makes use of many accessories to and principles of attention in order to give prayer a safe lodgment in the mind. The isolation of the person offers a possibility of uninterrupted and unrestricted self-expression. Social prayer affects and is affected by the devotional attitude of others.

Posture, such as kneeling, is not merely the attitude of a suppliant and the outward sign of reverence. It has a reflex influence on prayer. The closing or covering of the eyes excludes distractions. The automatic movements accompanying prayer increase the flow of blood to the brain, which releases energy, and their functional paths form channels of discharge for irrelevant impressions. As a rule, prayer has its genesis in an emotional state, and emotions render the personality highly suggestible. Oral prayer gives consciousness a definite direction. Automatic movements heighten the processes of respiration and circulation. They generate energy. Shifting from part to part, the attention is held to the prayer and emotion is aroused. Prayer tends to continue itself in accordance with the law of inertia. At bedtime when reference to objective criteria is difficult and the mind is thrown upon its own inner resources, the acceptance of prayer ideas is highly probable. Although the emotions generally prompt prayer, it sometimes occurs that voluntary attention restricts the field of consciousness to the act of prayer. The rosary is a mechanical exercise arousing mental images of religious importance out of which prayers may be constructed. All of these elements, and many more, tend to hold in mental focus the idea for the realization of which prayer is made. A summary suggests their cumulative effect.

The purpose of the process of attention in prayer is to select from the resources which experience has placed at our disposal, those ideas the expression of which can best minister to the existing pressure. It also makes these ideas clear and compelling.

Voluntary attention displays an elemental effort of will, the range of which is conditioned by the number of available ideas which one has. The voluntaristic strain in attention renders us morally responsible and creative.)

CHAPTER IV

FAITH IN PRAYER

Professor Münsterberg has well said that suggestion is more than the mere turning of the attention to one idea and away from another, that it is characterized by faith.[1] Among the authorities on suggestion there is no dissent from the opinion that a fundamental requirement of effective suggestion is a lively conviction that the idea held in mind will be realized. Now prayer also is more than the mere turning of the attention to one idea and away from another. It, too, is characterized by faith. Nothing could be more indisputable than that belief looms up large in the answering of prayer. On the one hand, the psychologist is certain that a suggested idea depends largely upon faith for its realization; on the other hand, the religious self is equally positive that without belief there can be no answer to prayer. In both suggestion and prayer an ideal cannot be realized unless a preliminary faith in its realization is exercised.

In order to appreciate the place of faith in prayer it will be necessary to isolate it, to consider the factors which promote its rise and growth, and to discuss its nature and function.

FACTS WHICH INSPIRE FAITH

Just as there are various factors which, when understood, tend to make prayer intelligible, so

[1] Münsterberg, Hugo: *Psychotherapy*, p. 100. Moffat, Yard & Co.

also there are discoverable many elements which suggest the nature of faith. Belief is doubtless affected by such factors as religious environment, devotional literature, positive testimonies of others, memories of answered prayers, favorable interpretations of unanswered petitions, the ignoring of negative cases, the acceptance of coincident instances, the repetition of prayer.

Before these items are examined a little more closely, it may be well to call attention to the fact that no sharp line of demarkation can be drawn between the elements which influence attention in prayer and those which promote belief. The two sets of influences interact. Faith promotes attention, and attention, faith. Isolation, social praying, posture, suspension of vision, motor automatism, emotional states, oral expression, change in object of attention, the law of inertia, repetition, devotions at night, mechanical devices, and volition all tend to engender faith by making the prayer prominent in the mind and excluding unfriendly ideas. On the other hand, we involuntarily attend to that which we believe.

Religious environment.—It goes without saying that the religious atmosphere into which one is born and the early impressions which one receives are influential factors in determining the kind and degree of faith exercised in prayer. One may be a firm disbeliever in prayer because one has been reared by skeptical parents. The type of religious education received cannot fail to color faith. If the child is taught conceptions of prayer which stand the test of experience, his religious faith is confirmed and established when he develops an

analytical attitude through contact with discriminating minds.

Devotional literature.—For many persons devotional literature is authoritative and consequently a stimulus to the faith state. The teaching of Jesus concerning prayer, as it is recorded in the New Testament, is significantly influential. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."[2] "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."[3] Such an emphasis on faith as the condition of answered prayer, coming as it does from the lips of the One to whom we accord supreme religious leadership, cannot fail to increase the faith of millions.

Statements like the following, taken from the literature of devotion, tend to confirm the biblical promise that faith shall see its reward: "Where there is true faith, it is impossible but the answer must come."[4] "There is no personal duty more positive or more unqualified than the duty of faith."[5] "How many prayers are hindered by our wretched unbelief! We go to God and ask him for something that is positively promised in his Word, and then we do not more than half expect to get it."[6] "An astronomer does not turn his telescope to the skies with a more reasonable hope of penetrating those distant heavens, than I have of reaching the mind of God, by lifting up my heart

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[2] Matthew 21: 22.
[3] Mark 11: 24.
[4] Murray, A.: *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 78. Fleming H. Revell Company.
[5] Trumbull, H. C.: *Prayer, Its Nature and Scope*, p. 69. Fleming H. Revell Company.
[6] Torrey, R. A.: *How to Pray*, p. 90. Fleming H. Revell Company.

at the throne of grace."[7] Prayer literature fairly teems with like affirmations of the value of believing prayer. Line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there much, exhort the reader to have a faith which knows no shadow of doubt. In fact, unbelief is the most frequent explanation of unanswered prayer.

Testimonies of others.—Closely allied to the influence of religious literature, is the testimony of those who have received direct answers to prayer. Faith is contagious. The definite and positive experiences of others, whose accounts are reliable, cannot fail to encourage one to make similar venture of faith. The more highly suggestible one is, the more likely one is to accept the testimony of another and to regulate conduct thereby. The commercial wisdom of the salesman turns to account the testimonial of one who has purchased his wares. The prayer meeting and other devotional services which witness to the efficacy of prayer awaken, confirm and strengthen faith.

Memory.—The person waxes bold in his devotions when he recalls positive personal prayer experiences. The remembrance of the comforting and encouraging presence of God in an hour of depression, of the healing of a disease, of conversion, of the attainment of personal purity, of temporal prosperity, of divine leading in perplexing situations, and of countless other things wrought through believing prayer, tends to raise prayer to a high degree of efficiency. The object of memory is suffused with a warmth and an intimacy to which no mere object of conception ever attains. Memory

[7] Phelps, A.: *The Still Hour*, p. 43. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co.

has a tendency to reinstate a past event with much of its original emotional glow. Sentimental and optimistic natures are inclined to place a halo around the pictures of memory, forgetting unpleasant details. Time, like distance, lends enchantment. A former successful petition to heaven now held in fond recollection is bathed in tender emotion. There are no more effective means of increasing faith than such cherished memories.

Serviceable interpretations of unanswered petitions.—The usual attitude taken toward unanswered prayers is of such a nature as not to weaken the faith state. They are generally either interpreted in terms which cast no reflection on prayer or are entirely ignored or forgotten. Negative cases when taken into consideration at all are readily accounted for by the majority of praying persons as referable to "lack of faith," "want of definiteness," "haste," "improper objects of prayer," and the like. Some do not distinguish answered from unanswered prayers, stoutly insisting that "no" is as truly an answer as "yes." They hold that often Providence withholds the insignificant thing asked for in order that an infinitely greater blessing may be bestowed; that Divine Wisdom may overrule our shortsightedness for our own good. Many affirm that God hears all our prayers, but answers only those which are conducive to our highest welfare. In some such manner the unanswered prayer when accounted for is almost invariably converted into a positive reason for the continuation and increase of faith.

Ignoring negative cases.—But most of the unanswered petitions are not even accounted for; they are generally forgotten. The writer knows

of no book bearing the title "Unanswered Prayer." Doubtless an overplus of material would be available for such a study if more unanswered prayers were taken seriously enough to be remembered. But such a work would be laughed to scorn by those whose habit it is to disregard negative instances. On the other hand, there is a superabundance of literature recording positive experiences. It seems to be human to forget our failures and to remember our successes; the former we write in shifting sands, but the latter we chisel in granite. The ancient kings, whose monuments are now being brought to light by the spade of the archæologist, were inclined to have their military and architectural achievements recorded on durable tablets, but were chary of reference to defeat and failure. Every field of human endeavor reveals the tendency to view success through the small end of the telescope and failure through the large end.

The ancient story of the man who was shown a temple hung with the pictures of all persons who had been saved from shipwreck after paying their vows bears repeating in this connection. When pressed as to whether he did not now acknowledge the power of the gods, he said, "Aye, but where are those painted who drowned after paying their vows?" It is only the exceptional mind that raises a question like the following: "In the recent Boxer uprising some of the missionaries escaped, and their escape was spoken of as a signal case of answer to prayer. But what of those who did not escape?"[8] From the foregoing it would seem rational

[8] Bowne, B. P.: *The Essence of Religion*, p. 158. Houghton Mifflin Company.

to infer that when ten prayers are made and only one of them is answered, as a rule the one positive experience is treasured and advertised while the nine failures are graciously overlooked and kept private. Thus on the whole unanswered prayer does not reduce faith, while the focusing of the attention upon the positive response intensifies it.

Coincidence.—Faith is not infrequently so robust as to overlook the element of chance and coincidence among answers to prayer. A certain caution in attributing results to prayer is often a mark of intelligence. Recently there came to the notice of the writer the case of a certain man who prayed God to give the Americans a bloodless victory over the Spaniards at Manila. When word came that without loss of life on their part the Americans had won the battle of Manila, this person rejoiced and steadfastly maintained that the victory was a direct answer to his prayer. What other persons would unhesitatingly refer to coincidence (prayers for bloodless victories are offered by both sides of opposing forces) he accepted as the particular intervention of God in response to his petition. He seemed to imply that if he had not made that prayer, some Americans might have been killed.

In all such cases there is presumption and blind acceptance, but little analysis and discrimination. If a cyclone lays waste a Western village, sparing only a lowly cottage the inmates of which prayed for deliverance, there are still to be considered the equally fervent petitions of the others whose homes are a shapeless mass of debris. The mind tends to interpret fresh experiences in terms of its general point of view, its expectations, and inclin-

ations. In an illuminating passage Francis Bacon describes the disposition to adapt facts to our preconceived notions: "The human understanding is no dry light, but receives an infusion from the will and affections, whence proceed sciences which may be called 'sciences as one would.' For what a man had rather were true he more readily believes." But even the interpretation of certain occurrences as answers to prayer when there is no rational justification for doing so, multiplies faith.

Repetition.—Faith may be evoked and increased by reiterating the prayer. At first belief may waver like a reed shaken in the wind, but with each successive repetition it develops strength. Reiteration makes the mental imagery of the object of the petition increasingly vivid and realistic and desirable. Analogies beyond the pale of prayer are not wanting. Who has not seen wares so persistently advertised that the prospective buyer, although skeptical at first, finally comes to believe in their proclaimed value and makes a purchase?

Since it is a law of our being that we grow in the direction of exercise, faith expressed increases faith. It turns on itself to its own enrichment. In the words of another, "Now there is only one way in which we can learn to trust, and that is by trusting. Therefore the duty of the man who feels inert and incapable of rising to the level of his belief, is to arouse himself, to say to himself again and again until it has become, as it were, his subconscious possession, 'Trust in God is rational and right, and therefore trust I will.' "[9]

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[9] Worcester, E.: *Religion and Medicine*, p. 319. Moffat, Yard & Co.

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF FAITH

Why is answer to prayer dependent upon faith? What is its nature and function? The answers to these queries will bring us close to the heart of prayer.

Faith as will.—Faith expresses itself in two modes, activity and passivity. In the incipient stages it manifests itself primarily in effort, later in self-surrender. Moved by active faith, the soul beats its wings against the bars of its prison in an endeavor to break through its limitations and live a larger life. In passages already quoted Jesus makes faith the essential condition of answer to prayer, but in the following quotation he emphasizes activity and striving: "*Ask*, and it shall be given you; *seek*, and ye shall find; *knock*, and it shall be opened unto you."[10] Now activity and faith are not mutually exclusive, the former being the expression of the latter. Jesus' exhortation to ask, seek and knock is a commentary on faith. Mr. Murray doubtless had this aspect of belief in mind when he wrote, "To believe truly is to will firmly."[11]

The justification of an aggressive faith is its stimulative function. This leaning out toward deliverance arouses and shapes subconscious activities of religious significance. If we take seriously the doctrine of the unity of life, and the cumulative evidence compels our assent, we must admit that in prayer as well as suggestion there is a subconscious response to faith. Prayer literature, testimonials of others, memory of positive instances,

[10] Luke 11: 9.
[11] Murray, Andrew: *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 75. Fleming H. Revell Company.

the favorable interpretation or neglect of negative cases, the acceptance of coincident answers, the reiteration of one's belief, all tend to rise out of and to give rise to longings, hopes, aspirations, strivings, endeavors, expectations, and strainings in the direction of the answer to prayer. James, with his usual penetration, has somewhere said that to know our limitations is in a sense to be already beyond them. The fact that the person who is praying or under the influence of suggestion is wholly ignorant and unconscious of any effort to realize his own prayer or the suggested idea, is no valid reason for assuming that none is being made, for the subconscious stimulation may be imperceptible to clear consciousness. All desires naturally marshal and turn to account those forces which normally operate toward their gratification.

How the subconscious accepts the challenge of active expectation of faith, is neatly described by Professor Starbuck as follows: "The unaccomplished volition is doubtless an indication that new nerve connections are budding, that a new channel of mental activity is being opened; and, in turn, the act of centering force (trying) in the given direction may, through increased circulation and heightened nutrition at that point, itself directly contribute to the formation of those nerve connections, through which the high potential of energy which corresponds to the new insight expends itself."[12]

Faith as self-surrender.—Strained expectation gives way to receptivity, self-assertion to self-

[12] Starbuck, E. D.: *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 111. Charles Scribner's Sons.

surrender, activity to passivity, tension to relaxation. Self-surrender is the casting of the self into the abyss. As a gambler who has lost all save a paltry sum which he ventures as his last stake, knowing well that he has but little to lose and everything to win, so the person after many seemingly fruitless attempts to obtain an answer to his prayer may in utter despair and as his last hope cast himself without reservation upon a higher power. Writers of devotional literature are one in their preachment of self-surrender as an essential of prayer. Mr. Murray, already quoted in regard to the activity of faith, expresses the opinion of the majority of them when he says, "Faith is simply surrender: I yield myself to the impression the tidings I hear make on me. By faith *I yield myself to the living God.*"[13] The act of surrender is frequently followed by a sudden and dramatic answering of the prayer.

Now, surrender is not peculiar to religious experience, it is a common occurrence in suggestion. As elsewhere indicated, it is necessary to cease from straining in order that the subconscious may deliver its product. In order that we may recollect a difficult name, we abandon our efforts to recall it. Faith as activity of the will initiates a subconscious process in the right general direction. Since our deeper-lying self is often wiser than our waking self, to attain the desired end the subconscious activity may deviate somewhat from the initial tendency given by the will. A conflict arises when the activity of the will and the corresponding subconscious growth are not harmonious and parallel.

[13] Murray, Andrew: *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 89. Fleming H. Revell Company.

Surrender of the self, or the cessation of conscious striving and trying, resolves the conflict and makes possible the complete realization of the suggested idea or religious desire.

Under normal conditions the person is induced to assume a passive attitude by a vague, undefined feeling that further activity can avail nothing. The conflict between the slightly misdirected self-assertion and the subconscious creation may result in the repose and calm which generally precede the act of surrender. In extreme cases there is weariness and despair, which may be the outcome of the exhaustion of the emotional brain centers. But be that all as it may, it seems to be the rule that trust, confidence, passivity, and receptivity must precede the answering of prayer.

The independence of faith.—We have seen that psychologists are agreed that a suggestion may be effective regardless of who or what is credited with the result. It is a form of experience, the content of which may be either religious or non-religious. Belief that the suggested idea will be realized is of prime importance, the identity of the supposed agent is a secondary matter so far as the subconscious response is concerned. It does not in the least affect the subconscious processes tending to realize the idea of health, whether the patient believes in the efficacy of a patent medicine or his physician. The mental attitude is the essential element. It is significant that answer to prayer has been attributed to diverse agencies. Graven images, prayer wheels, Buddha, Confucius, the Virgin, as well as the God of Jesus are appealed to and believed in by millions who witness to the

efficacy of their prayers. Religious faith as such makes effective the laws of the spiritual life. God moves upon the hearts of all men. He is the governor of not only the Christian fraction of the world but of the whole earth, and feeds the soul-hunger of millions who call, however mistakenly, to what they sincerely believe to be Lord of all. If answer to prayer depended upon a correct understanding of the metaphysical nature and character of God, religion, if it could have risen, would have died long ago.

There is, for instance, the peculiar practice that makes of prayer a charm, a talisman, a fetish. It is characterized by a belief in the mere repetition of prayer rather than by faith in a prayer-answering God. It is a dependence on the mere saying of prayers. A case in point is the following example of the so-called prayer-chain, which has been so widely circulated that it has become a veritable nuisance: "Lord Jesus, I implore thee to bless all mankind. Keep us from evil by thy precious blood and make us to dwell with thee in eternity. This is an exact copy of an ancient prayer. Copy it and see what will happen. It is said in Jerusalem that he who will not copy it, will meet with misfortune, but he who will write it nine days, beginning with the day he received it and shall send it each day to some friend, will on the ninth day experience some great joy and will be delivered from all calamities. Make a wish while writing this and do not break the chain."

The incessant and utterly meaningless repetition of the Lord's Prayer on the part of numberless persons savors of the magician's incantations. The

conception of prayer as a magical rite is well illustrated in the boyhood practice of the Rev. F. W. Robertson. He says: "I recollect when I was taken up with nine other boys at school to be unjustly punished, I prayed to escape the shame. The master, previously to flogging all the others, said to me, to the great bewilderment of the whole school: 'Little boy, I excuse you; I have particular reasons for it;' and, in fact, I was never flogged during the three years I was at that school. The incident settled my mind for a long time; only I doubt whether it did me any good, for prayer became a charm. I fancied myself the favorite of the Invisible. I knew I carried about a talisman, unknown to others, which would save me from all harm. It did not make me any better, it simply gave me security, as the Jew felt safe in being the descendant of Abraham, or went into battle under the protection of the ark, sinning no less all the time."[14]

A somewhat higher type of this variety is represented in the following method: "Times without number, in moments of supreme doubt, disappointment, discouragement, unhappiness, a certain prayer formula, which by degrees has built itself up in my mind, has been followed, in its utterance, by quick and astonishing relief."[15]

In a letter to a friend Mr. F. W. H. Myers expresses himself as follows in regard to the independence of prayer: "Plainly we must endeavor to draw in as much spiritual life as possible, and we must place our minds in any attitude which

[14] Robertson, F. W.: *Life and Letters*, p. 52. Harper & Brothers.
[15] Unbekannt: *The Outlook*, vol. lxxxiii, p. 858.

experience shows to be favorable to such indrawal. *Prayer* is the general name for that attitude of open and earnest expectancy. If we, then, ask to *whom* to pray, the answer (strangely enough) must be that *that* does not much matter. The prayer is not, indeed, a purely subjective thing; it means a real increase in intensity of absorption of spiritual power or grace; but we do not know enough of what takes place in the spiritual world to know how the prayer operates—*who* is cognizant of it, or through what channel the grace is given. Better let children pray to Christ, who at any rate is the highest individual spirit of whom we have any knowledge. But it would be rash to say that Christ himself *hears us:* while to say that *God* hears us is merely to restate the first principle—that grace flows in from the infinite spiritual world."[16]

Many lean upon the petitions of others. Their faith seems to be faith in deeply religious persons rather than in God. They request the prayers of others motivated by an undefined assumption that others stand closer to God than they. Such belief and practice seems to be a survival of the ancient confidence in the medicine man or magician to control the forces that affect the people. Something of this primitive faith is reflected in the appeal to a system of mediating personalities between God and man. God is so majestic and holy that it were a sacrilege to approach him directly; hence the saints are implored to intercede and exert their influence.

While many facts sustain the conclusion that

[16] Cited in James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 467. Longmans, Green & Co.

it is religious faith, and not necessarily an interpretation of that which is appealed to and acknowledged as the grantor of the request, which acts upon the forces realizing the prayer, it should not be overlooked that the nature of the things petitioned for varies with the character of the power implored. While it is a comfort that a theology cannot affect God, while it would be the world's greatest tragedy if the answer to our petitions depended upon an exact metaphysical conception of God, nevertheless, *a low conception of God begets prayers of a correspondingly low type, and a loftier conception lifts prayer to a higher moral plane.* Prayer cannot fail to reflect one's world-view, and, conversely, our philosophy influences our devotions. The prayers of primitive man for a bountiful harvest and victory in battle differ radically from those of a Christian for the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth.

SUMMARY

Faith is an indispensable element in both suggestion and prayer. True prayer is impossible without a lively conviction that there is a God and that he will respond to all who sincerely call upon him. Certain attitudes and practices have arisen which support and establish faith in prayer. The attitude toward unanswered petitions and coincident answers is in most instances of such a character that faith is not only undisturbed but actually increased. What we repeatedly hold before the mind develops a readiness to generate belief in its validity and value. Wise education in morals and religion, the reading of stimulating devotional

literature, the witness of others rich in prayer experience, the memory of productive cases all conspire to arouse and multiply faith.

Faith is a constructive force. In the earlier stages of the answering of the prayer faith awakens and regulates the subconscious powers which realize the expectations of the petitioner. When the answer has matured sufficiently to be ready to be the conscious acquisition of the self, faith assumes the nature of receptivity and passivity. Self-surrender withdraws all opposition to the developed product. The doctrine of the divine immanence makes inevitable the conclusion that God manifests himself creatively in the subconscious response to the appeal of faith.

The efficacy of faith as such is not absolutely conditioned by our theological doctrines. In the merciful economy of God men praying upon the various levels of religious insight receive the reward of faith. Nevertheless, the objectives of faith accord with the degree of spiritual culture attained, and in turn are themselves a partial disclosure of our religious conceptions.

CHAPTER V

THE ANSWER TO PERSONAL PETITIONAL PRAYER

WHAT is the nature of the response to petitional prayer in as far as that response lies within the field of psychology? Is it a product of the mental life, religiously influenced, or is it independent of and at variance with what we are pleased to call God's natural order? Is it describable in terms of subconscious reaction, or is it totally unlike anything else with which we are acquainted? Does prayer at this point part company with suggestion? What are the criteria, what are the methods that reveal the nature of the individual's response to petitional prayer?

The method of analyzing each typical subjective form of answer to such prayer and of comparing its psychological traits with like subconscious results will be adopted. This procedure is called the method of analogy. If it can be conclusively shown that answers to this type of petitional prayer and kindred subconscious products are related, the inference may be drawn logically that prayer employs the mechanism and technic of suggestion. If such a conclusion be imperative, it does not follow that prayer and suggestion are necessarily identical. As has already been anticipated, the prayer impulse creates the process of suggestion and employs it.

The many varieties of prayer response which are

reported make a classification extremely difficult. Tentatively, petitional prayers may be divided into two classes: prayers answered through the self and prayers answered through another self. Prayers falling under the first division are answered through the spiritual and mental forces of the personality itself; those of the second class depend for their response upon the cooperation of two or more selves. This grouping is in harmony with the classification of suggestion into social and auto-suggestion. Prayers answered through the petitioning personality itself include autosuggestion, and those answered through another self involve social suggestion. This chapter concerns itself with answers coming through the praying self, such as regeneration, ethical betterment, the cure of disease, divine guidance. It will be well to bear in mind that the purpose of the chapter is not so much to discover which prayers contain social suggestion and which self-suggestion as it is to inquire into the nature of the answer itself.

PRAYER FOR REGENERATION

The wonderful experience of regeneration is quite generally attributed to the power of believing prayer. In fact, so much have prayer and regeneration in common that in order to understand the one it is necessary to have a knowledge of the other. Scattered throughout Professor Starbuck's exhaustive inductive study of the psychology of conversion there are many autobiographical accounts of regeneration in terms of prayer. When the process of conversion is characterized by well-defined crises, there are recognizable the following factors: a

narrowing of the field of consciousness, faith as strained expectation, self-surrender, and elation. In most cases it is impossible to determine to a finality whether the prayer has its inception in a social or autosuggestion of religious origin, but under normal conditions the results are the same.

A sense of incompleteness.—The prayer expresses the disquieting sense of undoneness, and the yearning for the larger self. "There are forces in human life and its surroundings which tend to break the unity and harmony of consciousness; and its unity once destroyed, the contrast between what is and what might be gives birth to ideals and sets the two selves in sharp opposition to each other."[1] In his poem, "The Buried Life," Matthew Arnold has described this state of mind:

> "From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
> As from an infinitely distant land,
> Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
> A melancholy into all our day."

So long as this mental distress obtains, the person does not need to force himself to pray; the inner conflict is so great that it itself drives him to his knees. His emotions are aroused. He fasts or eats sparingly. He prostrates himself. He reiterates to heaven his petition for salvation. The conversion experience of men like Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, and Luther witnesses to the intensity of the strain in natures marked by moral sensitiveness and an abundance of emotion. It is needless

[1] Starbuck, E. D.: *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 155. Charles Scribner's Sons.

to add that, in the circumstances, the idea of deliverance is imposed upon the mind to the exclusion of other impressions.

Effort and result.—The person may for some time continue to be apparently unsuccessful in his effort to bring about the answering of his prayer for conversion.[2] Nature's method of healing a breach in consciousness is to widen it. The maturing of the new life is a complex process, requiring considerable time and repeated prayer. Faith as strained expectation is supported by the reading of the Bible and other devotional literature, the encouragement of friends, and other means of grace. What one longs for, leans out toward, strives for, and expects, is a cue for the subconscious energy. Faith, as effort, and the subconscious interact. In Christendom where Jesus is the acknowledged spiritual leader and Saviour, the subconscious processes of the seeker are naturally influenced by him. To hold in mind the Christlike ideal and to believe firmly in the possibility of attaining it is the first step in its actualization.

Parallels of subconscious incubation in response to straining are common in realms other than the religious, if one may make the distinction for the mere sake of clearness. The subconscious element in such mental processes as the solution of mathematical problems during sleep, the acquisition of skill in piano-playing, the construction of the plot for a novel, the recollection of difficult data, the contriving of an invention, is too generally known

[2] Since no distinction between conversion and regeneration is necessary in this discussion, none is made. Repentance is a change of mind, conversion acting on the new insight, regeneration the rebirth itself.

and admitted to make further comment necessary. An account of the steps by which a theologian reached what he calls his racial theory of the atonement reveals the kinship existing between the conscious effort and the subconscious. For six years he tried to preserve the important qualities of the three great historic theories of the atonement, but the result was so mechanical that he was at last obliged to throw it away. "I had become hopeless, when there suddenly came to me a vision of the full Christian meaning of the human race. This vision not only vitalized, but actually transformed, my entire theological situation. I saw not merely the atonement, but every doctrine, and the total combination of doctrine, in a new light. From that supreme hour (on one of the hills near Marburg) my one aim has been to get that racial vision into living expression."[3]

Self-surrender.—In his extremity the seeker, feeling that further striving would be useless, ceases to struggle and at once experiences a sense of pardon and deliverance from sin together with a feeling of oneness and unity with God and Christ. We have seen that cessation of conscious striving dissolves any conflict which may have developed in the course of the interaction between the will and the subconscious response. Before the new self can blossom into consciousness all opposition to the subliminal activities must cease. The will is exercised in the direction of the more victorious self until the old foundations of life become so shaken and insecure that the person finally casts

[3] Curtis, O. A.: *The Christian Faith*, p. 316. The Methodist Book Concern.

himself without reservation upon the deeper-lying power ready to assert itself. The unification of consciousness, the healing of the breach created by the opposition between the old and the ideal self, the functioning of a wider and more competent personality, relieve the tension and strain and evoke a sense of deep peace. There is now an active sympathy with the outside world, a living from within of the ideal that was once external, a glorification of the natural world, and often the birth of new intellectual and moral powers.

Analogous cases from the general field of the subconscious illustrating the effect of an attitude of receptivity opportunely assumed, are so numerous that a selection is embarrassing. The following may suffice: It occurred to Mr. F. H. Wenham, an amateur optician, that the binocular microscope devised by M. Nachet might be improved by means of a prism of a certain shape. "He thought of this a great deal, without being able to hit upon the form of prism which would do what was required; and as he was going into business as an engineer, he put his microscopic studies entirely aside for more than a fortnight, attending only to his other affairs. One evening, after his day's work was done and 'while he was reading a stupid novel,' thinking nothing whatever of his microscope, the form of the prism that should answer the purpose flashed into his mind. He fetched his mathematical instruments, drew a diagram of it, and worked out the angles which would be required; the next morning he made his prism, and found that it answered perfectly well; and it has been on this plan that all the 'binoculars'

hitherto in ordinary use in this country have been since constructed."[4]

Note the element of elation and satisfaction in a mathematical discovery by Sir W. Rowan Hamilton: "To-morrow will be the fifteenth birthday of the Quaternions. They started into life or light, fullgrown, on the 16th of October, 1843, as I was walking with Lady Hamilton to Dublin, and came up to Brougham Bridge. . . . I pulled out, on the spot, a pocketbook, which still exists, and made an entry, on which, *at the very moment*, I felt that it might be worth my while to expend the labor of at least ten (or it might be fifteen) years to come. But then it is fair to say that this was because I felt a *problem* to have been at that moment *solved* —an intellectual *want relieved*—which had *haunted* me for at least *fifteen years before*."[5]

Is conversion instantaneous?—It may be alleged that in many cases the interval between the making of the prayer for conversion and the coming of the answer is altogether too short to allow for the slow growth of the new life. This argument is advanced by some who still embrace the view that in order to be of divine origin an occurrence must not only be independent of law but also be dramatic and sudden. The experience of Saint Paul is frequently cited by them. Those who are of this opinion fail to take into account that although consenting to Stephen's death, Paul was too broad-minded not to have been profoundly moved by the eloquent apology and heroic spirit of the martyr. Neither should one overlook the probability that

[4] Carpenter, W. B.: *Mental Physiology*, p. 538. D. Appleton & Co.
[5] Cited in Carpenter, W. B.: *Mental Physiology*, p. 537. D. Appleton & Co.

the moral integrity of the Christians whom Paul persecuted could not have been altogether lost upon one of his passion for righteousness and fidelity to conviction. Furthermore, it is significant that between his vision before the gates of Damascus and his baptism, three days of fasting and prayer intervened. Doubts as to the ethical propriety of his open hostility to the new faith and a growing conviction that he should embrace Christianity, developed the crisis in which he turned from the wrong way of serving God to the right way.

Itinerant evangelists and superintendents of rescue missions are constantly referring to persons who come to a revival meeting sinful and degraded and without previous religious interest, but leave it having experienced sudden conversion. In reply two things should be affirmed. In the first place, no observer can deny that when the stimulus of an emotional revival has been withdrawn many converts "backslide." The religious instability of some may be due to a lack of preparation and a forced hot-house growth induced by the spell of the revivalist. Then, too, there seem to be in every community persons devoid of strong inner supports, liquid minds in a perpetual state of fluctuation, that yield to the social pressure of the moment only to shift the center of interest when something new is presented. The more permanent rescue mission with its continuity of pastoral supervision doubtless prevents many losses by training its converts in religion and morals, and by enlisting them in social service, by means of which the new life develops and finally becomes a subconscious possession. By this method the Christian

life that is peripheral becomes central, the ideals that are centripetal become centrifugal.

In the second place, it is indisputable that many cases of so-called sudden conversion are thoroughgoing. There is every reason to believe that these permanent and stable cases are invariably influenced by previous religious impressions made, perhaps years before, by the home and church. Deep down in the life of the one experiencing a sudden answer to the prayer for conversion there have doubtless been antecedent longings and a reaching out after the better life, which have induced a corresponding growth of the religious life. The very presence in a religious meeting of such a one, if sincere, is an evidence of yearnings for an enriched life. An opportune word from the lips of a revivalist may be the spark which explodes into consciousness what has been subconsciously maturing for a long time. The Holy Spirit makes contact with the subtle and intangible but none the less lasting and influential contributions of the religious forces which play upon the early years of life. Far be it from us to maintain that conversion without antecedent stages of development is impossible with God, but we are under obligation to reckon with his habitual method.

Subconscious parallels.—It may confirm the contention that the prayer for regeneration induces a subconscious creation, to point out analogous cases. The experiences of Buddha and of the Sioux Indian of the Omaha tribe may be cited. At twenty-nine Buddha, hungering after the higher values, made his great renunciation, leaving his beloved wife, infant son, and palatial home. After

seven years of what seemed to be fruitless searching, "one night, the old traditions narrate, the decisive turning point came, the moment wherein was vouchsafed to the seeker the certainty of discovery. Sitting under the tree, since then named the Tree of Knowledge, he went through successively purer and purer stages of abstraction of consciousness, until the sense of omniscient illumination came over him. . . . 'When I apprehended this,' he is reported to have said, 'and when I beheld this, my soul was released from the evil of desire, released from the evil of earthly existence, released from the evil of terror, released from the evil of ignorance. In the released awoke the knowledge of the release: extinct is rebirth, finished the sacred course, duty done, no more shall I return to this world; this I know.' "[6]

Among the Sioux Indians the adolescent boy is sent forth upon some hill to cry to Wakonda without asking for anything in particular. "By training his mind and body for days, the Sioux boy expels from his mind concepts discordant with this course of action. He fills his mind with the pictures of heroes; these heroes are the animals; and their deeds are examples of life. . . . Moistened earth is put upon his head and face, a small bow and arrows are given him. He seeks a secluded spot on some high hill; and under the pines he chants the prayer; he lifts to heaven his hands wet with tears and then lays them on the earth; he fasts, until at last after some days he falls into a sleep or trance. If in his dream or trance he hear or see anything, that thing is to become the special mediator through

[6] Oldenberg, H.: *Buddha*, p. 107. P. Eckler.

which he receives aid. Then, the ordeal over, the youth returns for food and rest. No one questions him, but at the end of four days he confides his vision to some old man, and starts to find the animal he has seen in his trance. The totem is the symbol of this animal. . . . By it his natural powers are to be reenforced so as to give him success as a hunter, victory as a warrior, and even ability to see into the future."[7]

There are resemblances in all forms of conversion and their parallels. A sense of incompleteness, a narrowing of the field of consciousness, a straining after deliverance, and a realization of the new self are characteristic of all varieties of conversion. The psychological aspects of the answer to the prayer for conversion and their parallel cases betray essential likenesses. They are instances of a group of facts already known.

The points of contrast between Christian conversions and others.—This does not imply that there is no difference between the solution of a mathematical problem and a conversion, or between the conversion of a Christian and the analogous experience of a Sioux Indian. The difference is of tremendous significance. The contrast is religious and moral. Ethical and religious ideas and ideals determine the value of the experience. Conceptions of God and duty condition the character of a religious transformation. Regardless of their moral nature, ideals tend to determine conduct. The ideal of a Buddha was the extinction of desire, the ideal of a Sioux boy is the strength and cunning of an

[7] Woods, J. H.: *The Practice and Science of Religion*, p. 65ff. Longmans, Green & Co.

animal, the ideal of a Christian is Jesus. To each is given according to the proportion of faith. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Ideals are seeds that grow, and their quality and kind determine the harvest of character.

The divine element.—The fact that the same general psychological principles underlie all types of conversion does not exclude the operations of God. In fact, the process as described may be regarded as a method whereby God is pleased to express himself. Surely, the self-activity of God may be as readily discerned in events reducible to his laws as in phenomena at variance with the natural order. Furthermore, the test of Christian character is not an experience unrelated to God's universe of law, but a life that is guided by the spirit of Christ, a life that brings the principles of the Master to bear upon the daily concerns, a life that is spent in the service of humanity. The divine character of a Christian experience is attested by the fact that a life is made divine. In conversion there is a divine impulse, an effort of the Eternal to express himself in time, and to realize in human life his moral character and purpose. Without this inner divine prompting there would be no straining of the self in the direction of righteousness, no faith in God, no creation of a new self. The Comforter reproves the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, and without this divine activity there could be no process of regeneration. The psychology of the prayer of conversion describes the mental accompaniments of the invasion of a human life by the divine impulse.

Not that the same God is not struggling for recog-

nition and supremacy in a Sioux or a Buddha. The acceptance of the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God makes it imperative that we regard any groping after moral light, any impulse toward righteousness, any spiritual aspiration as a response to the movement of one and the same creative and sustaining and vitalizing agency. Nevertheless, we sincerely believe God comes to fullest self-revelation in those who are led to him by Christ. And there are degrees of spiritual comprehension and attainment among individuals as well as among races.

Tolstoy's conversion and world-wide influence may be cited as a demonstration of the uniqueness of the Christian experience. Born the heir to vast estates and to the title of Count, moving in what is called high society, a talented musician, acquitting himself with honor on the field of battle, achieving literary fame as the author of short stories and novels, Tolstoy, nevertheless, for years had no satisfying portion. But one day while walking in the woods that surrounded his estate and while listening to the spring melody of the world coming to life, there came to him this revelation: "I can live only when I believe in God; when I do not believe I feel as if I must die. What seek I further? Without him I cannot live. To know God and to live are the same thing. God is life." The light never failed him. Since that hour of spiritual illumination and uplift, the pilgrims to his home have been legion, some seeking religious inspiration and guidance, others piqued by curiosity. A few adopted his literal interpretation of Jesus' teaching. Others departed, sorrowful because

unwilling to pay for the pearl of great price. Many accepted his message in part and returned to their respective lands to share the spirit of Christ.

PRAYER FOR ETHICAL BETTERMENT

As an example of answer to prayer for moral improvement, the breaking of a bad habit is typical. As a rule, many evil traits are permanently eliminated through conversion, but occasionally a post-conversion experience is necessary for the eradication of bad habits that are deeply rooted. "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet."[8] Regeneration may be regarded as the rebirth of the entire personality, while the elimination of a specific evil touches but a part of the self.

A case in point.—A farmer confessed that although he had been soundly converted and had united with the church, he was still subject to violent outbursts of temper. For a long time he prayed for self-control, but without any appreciable result. One day a steer broke through a fence and, going into a corn field, began to destroy the grain standing in shocks. The rest of the cattle were not long in following his example. By the dint of much labor the farmer drove the herd from the field, but the vexation cost him a paroxysm of rage. Ashamed and deeply penitent that he had given way to his besetting sin, he then and there fell upon his knees and renewed his prayer for deliverance from the evil. While in the act of prayer a tender and comforting feeling flooded his being, and he arose from his knees with the assurance that at last he had been set free. Although

[8] John 13: 10.

sorely tried and tempted, from that day he has retained self-mastery.

His conversion was doubtless genuine, but as to self-control it was potential rather than actual in its immediate effects. This virtue did not have time to become sufficiently drilled in before the old tendency to fits of temper reasserted itself. The old neural paths had either not been wholly assimilated into the new and higher centers or had not suffered a total atrophy of disuse, and therefore, perhaps after the exhilaration of a dramatic conversion had subsided, the former ruling passion began little by little to reorganize the remnants of its functional paths. A conflict between the old channels of discharge and the newly functioning personality ensued. Then followed a persistent effort in the form of prayer to unify consciousness. Attention was directed to the vulnerable spot in the self, faith in the power of prayer was exercised, a corresponding growth of self-discipline obtained. In reply to a question, the farmer stated that complete surrender characterized the petition that brought relief. The casting of the self upon the great world-life, when conditions were ripe, opened wide the way through which the energy was shot in the new direction. The instantaneous unification of consciousness eliminated all strain and tension and gave rise to a state of exaltation.

Parallel instances.—Other means are employed to break bad habits. Analogies outside the field of prayer may be found in the use of hypnotic suggestion for the correction of moral disorders. Alcoholism, lying, cowardice, kleptomania, sexual vices, and other defects of character have been success-

fully treated by experimenters in hypnotism.[9] A young man addicted to cigarette smoking was hypnotized by Dr. W. E. Harlow. In the hypnotic state the subject was told that if he ever smoked again he would vomit. At the command of the experimenter the subject repeated the suggestion: "If I smoke it will make me very sick. I will vomit." The next day when he lighted a cigarette he had an attack of nausea which induced vomiting. It is needless to state that the pernicious habit was permanently broken.[10]

The value of hypnotism in the cure of dipsomania is seen in the following case treated by Dr. G. B. Cutten: The patient began to drink when ten years old, acquiring the habit in his father's tavern. For forty-nine years he drank whisky. After the first hypnotic treatment, all desire for drink was gone. After the second, he could enter saloons while about his business without the least craving for intoxicants. When last heard of he was abstemious.[11]

The religious element.—Although any legitimate method of purging the self of its crasser elements reflects the divine operation, religion is plainly the most efficacious. The teachings of religion create the desire for reformation, without which ethical betterment would be impossible. Religion warns the sinner, emphasizes the consequences of his folly, and urges him to make his own the principles of righteousness. As the creator of high ideals no

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[9] See Thirty Authors, *Hypnotism and Hypnotic Suggestion*, p. 227ff. Edited by E. Virgil Neal and Charles S. Clark. New York State Publishing Company.

[10] Coombs, J. V.: *Religious Delusions*, p. 138. The Standard Publishing Company.

[11] *The Psychology of Alcoholism*, p. 345. Charles Scribner's Sons.

other means of reformation can take its place. Suggestion and hypnotism can do much, but they are no substitute for religion as a creator of a desire for an emancipation from ignorance, from the lower instincts, and from the dominance of all which tends downward. In the second place, religion in its organized form protects the life that has been delivered from its baser impulses. It throws about such a life the safeguards of healthful and powerful associations that make a moral relapse difficult. The church at its best is a fellowship. It imparts information and inspiration, promotes the devotional attitude, and has a social program. In a word, religion does all that can be done to bring about a moral change for the better and to conserve its results.

PRAYER FOR THE CURE OF DISEASE

Man's deep concern for physical efficiency is often expressed in the prayer for the healing of disease. Nothing could be more firmly established than the efficacy of prayer for the cure of certain physical disorders. Furthermore, no form of prayer reveals more clearly the elements of suggestion. A fixation of the attention, faith in the power appealed to, and a subconscious response are common to all varieties of divine and mental healing.

The principles of faith cure.—That cures are wrought through the power of prayer no one who has examined the evidence can doubt. Relief from a depressed physical condition is obtained through prayer by the friends of most of us. Typical cases are common. Mr. Torrey offers his testimony. He states that once when alone in his study he

seemed to become suddenly and seriously ill. He was in such severe pain that he was unable to arise and summon help. Fearing that he would be left alone and unaided for an entire night unless he secured strength to care for himself, he resorted to prayer, and was shortly greatly relieved.[12] It would be easy to introduce many other similar instances, but all cases are reducible to the same fundamental principles.

On close inspection the psychologist is led to believe that all such cures are traceable to the effect of suggestion. The petition for healing holds in mental focus the idea of recovery and restoration. The field of consciousness is restricted to the thought of health to the exclusion of the contrary ideas of disease. Christian Science not only exhorts us to banish all thought of sickness but goes so far as to declare the nonexistence of disease itself.

It is an undisputed fact in mental therapeutics that the expectation of the cure is indispensable to its realization. Dr. H. H. Goddard, who made a special study of the influence of the mind upon the body with special reference to faith cures, discovered that in all forms of mental healing there is the same and constant principle that the idea of health tends to produce health in proportion to the strength of the idea.[13] It is the patient's faith which effects the cure. The power of recovery may be latent. In order to make actual the potential cure, the quickening touch of faith must be supplied. The outcome of the suggestion does not necessarily depend upon the nature of the

[12] Torrey, R. A.: *How to Pray*, p. 18. Fleming H. Revell Company.
[13] *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. x, p. 431ff.

healing power believed in, but upon organic activities aroused by expectation. To the actual healing of their diseases men have believed in the curative virtue of charms, incantations, sacred relics, amulets, the imposition of hands, the royal touch, the toenails of Saint Peter, fragments of the cross, the tears of the Virgin, the bones of saints long dead, nostrums, blue glass, magnetized objects, and what not.

That there is a reciprocal relation between the conditions of the body and the attitudes of the mind has long been recognized as a demonstrable fact. The body tends to adjust itself to mental states. What is induced mentally, can be eliminated mentally. It is safe to say that when a bodily disorder is the direct result of such a state of mind as worry and anxiety, only a complete mental change can afford relief. A bodily condition which is anticipated with confidence and certainty is likely to ensue, if it be within the bounds of possibility. This is a law which is equally applicable to the cause or cure of disease by suggestion. However the thought of the cure enters the mind, if it be dominant, the subconscious which controls the bodily functions will respond to the measure of its power to restore to health. Confident expectation, occupying the whole mind and banishing contrary and competitive ideas, tends to realize itself subconsciously.

Illustrations of various effects of suggestion.— The following parallel to the mental element in the answer to the prayer for health is doubly interesting and instructive, for it shows that suggestion has power not only to cure but also to make ill.

"I was to deliver the annual address before a college graduating class. When I arose in the morning I was too hoarse to speak. What must I do? The students depended upon me. I decided to resort to quinine—went to a drug friend and asked him for twenty-five cents' worth of two-grain capsules. I went to my room and began to take the capsules. In two hours my cold was breaking; I could talk some, and I was wet with perspiration. I became alarmed and told my attendant to examine the capsules to see if there were two grains in them. On examination the capsules were found to be empty. The druggist thought I wanted to fill the capsules myself. I had taken no quinine, but my cold was cured, and I delivered my address. . . . When I related my experience with the empty capsules in a lecture at Lorain, Ohio, two sisters were much amused. They came to me and told me this story: The nurse prepared some capsules for the two sisters who were sick; one was cured, and the other was made sick with *the nasty bitter quinine.* By mistake they had taken the empty capsules."[14]

The scope of faith cure.—It is well to remember that no form of faith cure, functioning through the subconscious, is omnipotent. There are limitations which this form of prayer for healing cannot transcend, limitations marked by those of suggestion. The subconscious is not an inexhaustible reservoir of vitality. Only when there is an adequate supply of force resident within the personality can the suggested idea be realized. When disease has impaired the human organism below a certain point,

[14] Coombs, J. V.: *Religious Delusions*, p. 141. The Standard Publishing Company.

and in the providence of God life has run its course, the prayer for health is unanswered, be it ever so persistently held in mind and relied upon by the patient. It is appointed unto man once to die. A medical practitioner recently remarked that if prayer could always cure us, none of us would ever die.

In order to appreciate the scope of prayer in the cure of disease it is necessary to have in mind the practical classification of ailments into organic and functional disorders. Organic diseases are characterized by a destruction of bodily tissue. Consumption and cancer are typical organic diseases. A functional ailment is occasioned by a perverted action of the intact organs. This group embraces the many nervous and gastric derangements. It has been demonstrated over and over again that functional diseases are directly curable through suggestion. In surgical cases, as well as in all organic disorders, suggestion may, to be sure, create an atmosphere of good cheer which is auxiliary to the cure. Diseases which heal of their own accord, like typhoid and pneumonia, may find in prayer a tonic. To attempt to remove through prayer a bullet embedded in the flesh would be as preposterous as to throw a stone into the water with the expectation of making it float through the power of suggestion.

In their efforts to establish their claims that organic diseases and cases usually referred to the surgeon are curable by faith, the advocates of an extreme form of divine healing have displayed more heat than light. As far as the writer has been able to determine, the alleged proofs for the validity

of their so-called test-cases have been uniformly exploded when critically investigated. Many cases considered organic have not been diagnosed as such by a competent physician. Other cases pronounced organic by a fallible medical man are later discovered to be purely functional. Again, some organic disorders heal spontaneously, and all that mental treatment can do, which is really very much, is to act as a tonic for the mind. Furthermore, some patients under proper treatment for organic diseases become restive because recovery seems retarded, and resort to some form of faith cure in the course of which health is restored. Of course the mental practice receives the credit which rightfully belongs to the regular medical method.

As an example of the lack of scientific precision that generally obtains in the collecting of test-cases revealing evidence of the power of prayer to cure organic cases, the following is illuminating: A surgeon bandaged the broken arm of a boy ten years old. The following morning the boy said to his father, "Please take off these bandages, my arm is well." "Oh no, my son, you will have to wear the splints several weeks." "Papa, do you believe in prayer? Last night I asked Jesus to cure my arm and he did it." The bandages were removed and the arm was found to be perfectly well. The case was widely circulated as an evidence of the remarkable power of prayer, but investigation proved it to be spurious. The patient is now a physician, and in a signed statement says that the broken arm was only a green-stick fracture, and after having it bandaged for several days the splints were removed to please a spoiled boy. The

bone would have united of its own accord in a few days. The arm was carried in a sling for several days after the removal of the bandage. This is the miracle which had its inception in the mind of a religious enthusiast.[15]

Christian Science is particularly stubborn in its insistence that it is the wonderful exception to the rule of curative limitation. Dr. Richard C. Cabot examined one hundred consecutive reports of the cases cured as published in the *Christian Science Journal*.[16] His findings disclose that the majority of these cases, according to symptoms reported, are functional. Nervousness, kidney and bladder trouble, stomach and intestinal disorders, drug and tobacco habits, headache and alcoholism are some of the functional ailments reported cured. Seven cases were apparently organic, but some of these were inadequately diagnosed, while others were such as heal of their own accord, like cuts and bruises. Dr. Cabot calls attention to the fact that by a process of natural selection the patients who are attracted by Christian Science are as a rule affected functionally. The functional disturbance renders the patient susceptible to the methods of the mind curist.

Prayer and science.—What is called the Emmanuel Movement is a commendable organized attempt to unite intelligent religion and scientific medical treatment.[17] Dr. S. McComb, who was associated with Dr. Worcester in this movement, calls attention to three essential features in which this un-

[15] Coombs, J. V.: *Religious Delusions*, pp. 147–148. The Standard Publishing Company.

[16] *McClure*, August, 1908.

[17] See Worcester, E.: *Religion and Medicine*, Moffat, Yard & Co., and *The Christian Religion as a Healing Power*, Moffat, Yard & Co.

dertaking differs from Christian Science. In the first place, unlike Christian Science, this movement could not maintain itself for a single day without the cooperation of a staff of physicians. In the second place, whereas Eddyism professes to be a distinct revealed religion with a sacred book and a curative method of its own, the Emmanuel Movement affects no special revelation, but accepts as its theological basis the New Testament as interpreted by constructive modern scholarship, and adopts the procedures common to all scientific mental treatment, such as suggestion, confession, the rest cure, the work cure, and especially prayer and instruction in religion and morals. In the third place, it differs from Christian Science in accepting for mental methods only functional derangements, looking to medical, physiological, and surgical treatment for the cure of organic diseases. Far from assuming the function of the medical profession, the clergymen at the head of this undertaking tend to restrict their efforts to such cases of functional disorders as require religious and moral uplift for their cure. Dr. McComb refers to a nervous sufferer who said, "Prove to me that God loves me, and I will leave this place a well man."

In such intelligent and devout ways the church must minister to the sick as she alone can, or let her people become the prey of the charlatans always coming to the fore.

PRAYER FOR DIVINE GUIDANCE

A large group of prayers the burden of which is a cry for deliverance out of a perplexity will now

receive attention. The answers to this type of petition range all the way from a mental poise enabling the person to solve his problem through the ordinary process of reasoning or action, to an inward illumination coming with all the force of a divine revelation.

Prayer and poise.—Often the mental repose attained in prayer is the chief condition necessary to a proper readjustment of the person. A respondent writes, "Many times prayer calms the heart and mind so that the person can think of a way." To believe in the prayer for divine help inspires the personality with a confidence which banishes all fear and worry and other mental states which obscure a dispassionate view of a difficulty and inhibit any effort to overcome it. The expectation of the cooperation of a mighty helper often constructs a personality competent to do what one asks God to accomplish for one in a mysterious and miraculous way. A Methodist bishop said in a public address that he prayed for wisdom and insight into the duties of episcopal administration, and then relied upon his own best judgment in making the annual appointments of preachers to the churches.

The Rev. W. A. Sunday says that prayer helped him in his first ball game after his conversion. At a critical point in the game a fly came to him in the field. He says: "It was up to me. I turned and ran with all my might and said, 'O God! if you ever helped a mortal man in your life, help me get that ball, and you haven't much time to decide.' I looked over my shoulder and saw the ball near—I shot out my left hand, and the ball struck and

stuck." Perhaps the answer to this prayer was a release from fear and the creation of confidence, which induced effective muscular control.[18]

Of a similar nature is the psychological element of a prayer made by a young girl, Jennie Creek, in a moment fraught with peril for many lives. Discovering a burning railroad bridge, hearing the whistle of the eastbound Chicago express with its load of passengers from the World's Fair thundering along to certain destruction, and realizing that she must somehow stop the train, she cried out in her agony: "Lord Jesus, help me. Tell me what to do." She knew that a red flag was the sign of danger. Remembering her underskirt of red flannel, she tore off the petticoat and ran toward the train, waving the garment and shouting. In an instant the signal flashed into the eye of the engineer, and the train was brought to a standstill on the very brink of ruin, but safe.[19]

Prayer and unconscious memory.—Other prayers for divine help induce an impulse, rather irrational in nature but strong enough to incite activity, in the direction of the answer. Recently a case in point was reported. A young farmer while plowing in an immense field lost a monkey wrench. When the tool was needed to adjust the plow its loss was discovered. He walked back half a mile in the furrow, but failed to find it. To have returned to the farm house three miles away would have entailed a great loss of time; hence the predicament was made the subject of prayer. In response to

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[18] Cited in Pratt, J. B.: *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, vol. iv, p. 58.

[19] Cf. Pope, Howard W.: *Why a Girl Should be a Christian*, a tract.

an impulse he stepped across three furrows, kicking up the wrench. The psychological phase of this experience is reducible to what is known as subconscious perception and its stimulation, a more detailed account of which must be reserved for the following chapter. For the present it will suffice to say that an impulse to act is often excited by factors too delicate to be noted by clear consciousness. Doubtless the falling of the tool was not clearly heard or seen, but was subconsciously registered. Perhaps the prayer stimulated the subconscious impressions, which, in turn, gave rise to the impulse to walk to where the wrench was.

Doubtless the prompting is frequently created by a dormant memory that cannot quite express itself in the form of definite recollection. Miss A. L. Strong records an interesting illustration. A college woman lost a notebook which she desired to make use of in preparation for an examination. In her concern she made the loss a matter of prayer saying: "If it is your will that I try the examination without this book, as a punishment for my carelessness, very well." Immediately she felt an unaccountable impulse to visit a certain village store. She yielded to the inner prompting. As she entered the store the salesman approached her with the book in his hand, saying, "You left this here ten days ago, and I could not send it, not knowing your address." It was not until then that a special visit to the store was recalled. The prayer in this instance was an expression of resignation to the permanent loss of the notebook as a punishment for carelessness, rather than a pronounced, unwavering petition for its recovery. The case

is analogous to the recollection of a name by abandoning the effort to recall it.[20]

Guidance by voices and visions.—Sometimes the answer to this type of prayer comes in the form of subconscious action exploded into consciousness with the force of an external impression. A woman who resided in the West reported that she received a telegram stating that her mother in the East was critically ill and that recovery was doubtful. Strange to say, the daughter could not decide whether to remain at home or to hasten to her mother's side. On the one hand, she was pressed by the entertaining of guests, household duties, and lack of funds for an extensive journey. On the other hand, the natural impulse of a daughter to nurse her mother in what might prove to be her last illness was almost irresistible. Torn asunder by conflicting thoughts, she resorted to prayer, believing that her plea for light would be answered. A few days later while washing some dishes and occupying her mind with matters far removed from prayer, a vivid flash of insight made it clear to her that it was her duty to remain at home. The problem solved, she regained her mental poise, resting content in the knowledge that relatives in the East would give her mother the best of care. The case clearly discloses the essentials of suggestion; a narrowing of the field of consciousness, faith, a period of subconscious incubation, a sudden report when an attitude of passivity was assumed.

The following experience is analogous: "When at school I was fond of trying my hand at geometrical problems. One baffled me. I often returned to it,

[20] Strong, A. L.: *The Psychology of Prayer*, p. 55. The University of Chicago Press.

in fact, I kept by me an elaborate figure. Some years after, and when the problem had not been touched by me for some time, I had been sitting up till the small hours, deciphering a cryptograph for one of my pupils. Exulting in the successful solution, I turned into bed; and suddenly there flashed across my mind the secret of the solution of the problem with which I had so long vainly dealt, this secret being a slight addition to my elaborate figure. The effect on me was strange. I trembled, as if in the presence of another being who had communicated the secret to me."[21]

Another analogy is the experience of Socrates and his *daimon*. It will be recalled that the great philosopher, throughout his whole life, was conscious, on certain occasions, of a divine sign, a voice, that he called his *daimon*. It assumed for him the influence of an external higher revelation. Its power was negative and never positive. It did not manifest itself when an apparently proper course of action was about to be or was being pursued; only when he was about to disregard his deepest moral insight did it exercise its restraining influence. To hold in mental focus an idea of ethical import was characteristic of him; he was known to have been absorbed in contemplation for a whole day at a time. "What distinguished Socrates in his general conduct from his fellow-citizens was his power of inward concentration."[22] His absolute confidence in the reliability of the *daimon* was in reality the casting of himself upon his own inward and spiritual powers, in response

[21] Cited in Carpenter, W. B.: *Mental Physiology*, p. 536. D. Appleton & Co.
[22] Zeller, E.: *Socrates and the Socratic School*, p. 97. Longmans, Green & Co.

to which there rushed up from the subconscious currents an ethical insight in the form of an auditory experience.

Temperament and prayer response.—In this connection it is well to note that Professor Coe in an inductive study of the influence of temperament in religion, finds that those who have voices and visions in their religious life are subject to them in other respects.[23] Where there is a predisposition to them in general, the prayer relation is likely to be characterized by mental projections in various forms. This is, however, not the place to attempt an extended description of such mental states, but merely to point out that the sanguine and melancholic temperaments, accompanied as they are by an abundance of emotion and a high degree of suggestibility, are subject to voices and visions of both religious and nonreligious significance. Where favorable temperamental conditions, concentration of the mind upon certain groups of ideas, and expectation obtain, the visible or audible answer to prayer is usually forthcoming.[24]

The form of the exteriorized idea is, perhaps, largely determined by the type or types of mental imagery predominating in the individual. Where the imagination is principally in the form of mental pictures seen by the mind's eye, the experience is likely to be visual; where the mental imagery is in terms of sounds, the person hears voices. Socrates, since the oracle was audible, must have been largely ear-minded. Where both the visual and the auditory types are found together in the same person,

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[23] See Coe, G. A.: *The Spiritual Life*, p. 104ff. The Methodist Book Concern.
[24] See Parish, E.: *Hallucinations and Illusions*. Charles Scribner's Sons.

as they almost invariably are, the temperamentally predisposed person is likely to see visions which speak.

SUMMARY

We are now prepared to appreciate the presence and the importance of the psychological aspects of the personal petitional prayer. We have observed that attention in prayer is a basal condition. The concentration of the mind is not only selective, narrowing the field of consciousness to the group of prayer ideas, but also, by excluding contrary notions, productive of the faith state. Other elements also arouse and increase faith. At first, consciously or unconsciously, faith strives toward the realization of the prayer, and then becomes passive in order that the answer may come to completion and be the conscious possession of the self. The prayer held in mental focus and believed in constitutes an appeal to the mental and religious powers. The answer to prayer ranges all the way from the calming of an excited and distressed mind or the elevation of a depressed spirit to an actual moral and religious rebirth of the self.

It should be clear that prayer is infinitely more than the elements of suggestion it includes. Suggestion is, indeed, prominent in petitions, but prayer is assuredly more than a mental impression which discharges itself subconsciously. Prayer is religiously motivated, sanctioned, and controlled. The religious consciousness creates suggestion, suffuses it with religious emotion, imparts to it a religious significance, and interprets its results religiously. The petition is addressed directly to

God who is rightfully acknowledged to be the grantor or withholder of the request.

The reaches of religious experience transcend the discoverable and identifiable psychological elements. Suggestion is the means which petitional prayer constructs and employs to further its ends. Prayer is human striving plus x, the value of x being the illuminating and purifying action of the Holy Spirit whom no psychological terminology can define or limit. There is no cogent reason for assuming that a psychological account of prayer includes the experience in its totality. The heart of prayer eludes the categories of science. To the scientific method of studying religion should be added the outlook and the insight of a sound philosophy. Science should not presume to exclude Christian doctrine from the field of religious experience. Christian prayer arises from an appreciation of a personal relation to God as our Father. It is the creative energy of God within man which induces and supports the process of suggestion and transforms it into a spiritual force.

CHAPTER VI

THE ANSWER TO COOPERATIVE PRAYER

As observed elsewhere, the petitional prayers may be divided into two large classes, the one class consisting of those answered through the religious forces of the self, and the other consisting of those answered through the cooperation of another self. We have studied the first class, but now it is our task to examine the second. We shall presently understand that the prayer designed to influence another tends to create a religious-social suggestion. Social suggestion is, then, the prominent psychological mechanism of all prayers involving the concurrent activities of two or more selves.

The two classes of petitions are closely related. The prayer coming from the heart of one person may enter the mind of another and there undergo a series of modifications which entirely transmute it. The petition answered through the self may have had its origin only immediately in the mind of the petitioner; more remotely it may have sprung warm from the life of another. It is evident that any prayer which may be answered through a petitioning self may also be answered through a cooperating self, answers being frequently obtainable to the prayers for the conversion of others, their moral betterment, physical healing, and divine guidance. Since they have already been described,

it will not be necessary to examine in detail the responses to these forms of altruistic and intercessory petitions.

The answers to the cooperative petition may be reduced to two groups, the first consisting of the answers to prayers of which the responding self has definite knowledge, and the second consisting of the answers to petitions of which the contributing self has no conscious knowledge.

THE ANSWER TO THE KNOWN COOPERATIVE PRAYER

One listens to a prayer for material aid or for an active interest in a good cause and is moved to answer the appeal, or hears a prayer imparting wisdom and encouragement and is cheered and inspired. A religious force plays upon the self, inducing a practical reaction to an entreaty for substance or personal devotion, or informing and edifying one. In such cases prayer includes a social suggestion created by the religious impulse of the petitioning self and received by the responding self. An impression is created in another which tends to realize itself through the religious forces of the self. The effect of such a prayer is determined both by the willingness and by the ability of the cooperating self.

KNOWN PRAYERS FOR SUBSTANCE AND ACTION

Petitions for things within the gift of others, such as money and energy, may be answered by letting others know of the need and of the dependence upon the prayer for its supply. The measure of the response is conditioned by the generosity and means, or the intelligence, willingness, and

capabilities, of those who hear the petition or know of it.

Prayers for material aid.—Orphanages and other charitable institutions have been successfully conducted by superintendents relying solely upon prayer to supply the necessary funds.[1] It is reported that the Open Door Mission in Chicago feeds and lodges six hundred to seven hundred men, without soliciting human aid. The China Inland Mission receives applications from suitable persons, such as ministers, physicians, nurses, and teachers, without any restrictions of sex or number, who, having commended themselves to the Mission, are sent to China as speedily as prayers for the necessary funds are answered. This organization is maintained entirely by the voluntary contributions of its friends, no funds being directly solicited. The sole reliance is upon prayer. The nature of such benevolent causes and the fact that it is generally known that they are dependent upon the liberality of the public for their support, make their own irresistible appeal. It would be difficult to imagine circumstances more conducive to the arousing of the social sympathies.

Sometimes the social prayer is made for the purpose of inducing immediate action, as when a minister prays that the congregation contribute liberally toward some benevolence for which subscriptions are about to be taken. A minister relates that when about to dedicate a newly erected church he requested the help of a pastor who was noted for his ability to collect money and take subscriptions. On the eve of dedication the pastor called the officiary of the church together for consultation

[1] See Müller, George: *The Life of Trust.* T. Y. Crowell & Co.

and financial support. The officials turned a deaf ear to the entreaties of both the pastor and the quasi-professional money-getter for substantial pledges. As a last resort the assisting pastor led the group in prayer, beseeching God to enlighten them as to the importance of the church and to inspire them with the spirit of sacrifice. They were moved to tears, and after the prayer so generously responded that the church could be dedicated without debt the following day.

It is unpsychological to arouse benevolent impulses only to deny them outward expression. Repeated stimulation without action leads to the pernicious habit of allowing good intentions to evaporate. It weakens the will. The wise clergyman, for instance, offers prayer before the collection is taken, thus not only quickening the generosity of the people, but also affording them an immediate opportunity to give it a concrete manifestation. To pray save as an expression of thanksgiving, after the offering has been taken, is to make a subtle appeal without permitting a practical response.

Prayers for the control of action.—The prayer for the active participation of others in the work of the church or any other uplifting cause is the most effective appeal which could be made. The petition is an indirect solicitation, an appeal in the name of religious and humanitarian concerns, which arouses the noblest in man. That faith in this form of religious control is times without number rewarded by positive results should occasion no surprise.

There is marvelous wisdom revealed in the injunction of Jesus, "The harvest truly is plenteous,

but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."[2] This saying was taken seriously by the superintendent of a Junior League who petitioned God to send her teachers to assist in the religious instruction of the children under her supervision. She arose from her knees under the conviction that if she went into the street, her prayer would be answered. She obeyed the impulse, but failed to enlist anyone in the street. She then felt moved to enter a home where a young woman resided with whom she was acquainted. When informed that her friend was not at home, the religious worker requested the mother to interest the absent daughter in the Junior League. The mother reluctantly consented, maintaining that her daughter was occupied by too many other things to assume added responsibility. Entering a second home, the superintendent met with another disappointment. The young woman solicited refused her services on the grounds of pressing social engagements. The petitioner returned home in a confused state of mind, for she had confidently expected a more hearty response to her appeal in answer to her prayer. She was, however, agreeably surprised when after a few weeks both young women reported for duty as volunteer teachers.

When others were approached with the request the petition assumed the form of a religious-social suggestion. It is of interest to notice that in the first home entered the request was lodged in the mind of the young woman through the medium of the mother, thus bringing into cooperation two

[2] Matthew 9: 37–38.

other selves. In the other home the appeal was directly made. The indirect and the direct appeal developed within both minds a practical response. Within a few weeks antagonistic inclinations gave way to the call to high service.

A Methodist layman in a letter to his son preparing himself for the Christian ministry, says: "You are our first-born, and in a tender moment we dedicated you to the ministry in the church in which your mother was reared and at whose altars I was converted. . . . Your mother and I, before you were an hour old, prayed that God would choose you to be one of his ministers. You know that we have not forced you to enter the ministry, or even urged you."[3] The prayer of dedication, followed, as it doubtless was, by numberless intercessions, wove itself into the texture of the son's character and was influential in turning him toward the ministry as a calling.

KNOWN INSTRUCTIONAL AND HORTATORY PRAYER

Many social prayers seem to have a didactic or inspirational purpose. They are formally addressed to God, but they also instruct and admonish men. Springing from an altruistic motive, they are not designed to secure the substance of others but to widen the vision, comfort and encourage those who hear them. In the name of religion they move men for their own good.

Pulpit prayer.—Truly edifying and uplifting is the pulpit prayer which wells up spontaneously from the deeps of a sincere and intelligent heart,

[3] Allen, Robert: *Letters of an Old Methodist to His Son in the Ministry*, p. 15. Fleming H. Revell Company.

and voices the common supplications and aspirations of the worshiping congregation. It is refreshing and life-giving. The gift of public prayer is perhaps rarer than that of preaching. If it were intended to influence God only, and not also man, the minister might be content to pray for the congregation in the privacy of his study. As it is —and it is as it should be—the pulpit prayer as a warm appreciation of religious values moves through the pulses of the people, quickening every spiritual perception and deepening every holy resolve. Note the union of devotional and ethical elements in the following felicitously expressed paragraph from one of the many deeply spiritual pulpit prayers of Alexander Maclaren:

"We pray thee to forgive all the shortcomings and the failures to hold fast that which we have, and to live by that which we know. We pray thee to cleanse our hearts from all their waywardness, and all their wanderings, and to fix them upon thyself. We beseech thee that more and more it may to us be Christ to live, that his name may ever be dearest to us, and shrined in the very depths of our heart's love; that his commandments may be our supreme law, and to please him our highest aim."[4]

Great as Henry Ward Beecher was as a preacher, he was even greater as a man of public prayer. So profoundly did his pulpit prayers move the hearts and minds of the congregation that the sermon which followed, eloquent as it was, often seemed superfluous. They were replete with the simplicity of genuineness, a sympathy that em-

[4] Maclaren, Alexander: *Pulpit Prayers*, p. 94. George H. Doran Company.

braced all the varied conditions of men, and a keen sense of justice and equity. The following Sabbath invocation is typical of his style and sentiment:

"We thank thee that we have come together again this morning, after the labor of the week and its weariness. Grant that we may have a settled peace—that peace of God that passeth all understanding. May we yield ourselves up to him implicitly. May we rejoice that his will is better than ours. And amidst thwartings and castings down, and disappointments, let us not feel that our life is lost, or that we are losing it. May we be able to say, in all events, 'The will of the Lord be done.' If we are weakened by excess of sorrow, or if our eyes are dim that we cannot see, or if we have lost the way and know not how to find it, O Lord God of our salvation, be merciful to us and look upon our weakness, and in thine infinite compassion revive us again, and put us upon our feet, and let us hear the voice, though it be in darkness, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' "[5]

Other public prayers.—The sectarian element is reduced to a minimum and the ethical aspect of religion magnified in the prayers of the chaplains of fraternal, military, governmental, and other non-ecclesiastical organizations. The fundamental religious conceptions common to the great body of spiritually minded people are introduced as the ground and motive of right social relationships. By way of illustration one may quote a few paragraphs from a prayer offered by Chaplain Henry N. Couden at the opening of the second session of

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[5] Handford, Thomas W.: *Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 263. Belford, Clark & Co.

the House of Representatives of the sixty-second Congress of the United States:

"Impress us, we beseech thee, with the vast responsibility resting upon us as a people, that we may prove ourselves worthy of the confidence reposed in us, and distinguish clearly between liberty and justice, freedom and license, purity and impurity in the things which make for good citizenship, that we may work together with thee toward the higher and better forms of life in the spirit of the world's great Exemplar.

"Imbue the minds and hearts of these thy servants, now convened in Congress, with the highest ideals, that they may walk worthy of the vocation whereunto they are called. Impart unto those who sit at the bar of justice clearness of vision, that they may judge wisely and impartially the intricate problems which confront them."[6]

Although many are composing and publishing prayers expressive of the life peculiar to various classes and conditions of society, no one has been more inspirational or uplifting than Professor Walter Rauschenbusch. His purest gem is, perhaps, a prayer for all mothers. One cannot read it without a new appreciation of the sacredness and sacrifice of motherhood. The following paragraph will suggest its social value:

"O God, we offer thee praise and benediction for the sweet ministries of motherhood in human life. We bless thee for our own dear mothers who built up our life by theirs; who bore us in travail and loved us the more for the pain we gave; who

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[6] Conden, Henry N.: *Prayers*, p. 41. The Crowell Publishing Company.

nourished us at their breast and hushed us to sleep in the warm security of their arms. We thank thee for their tireless love, for their voiceless prayers, for the agony with which they followed us through our sins and won us back, for the Christly power of sacrifice and redemption in mother-love. We pray thee to forgive us if in thoughtless selfishness we have taken their love as our due without giving the tenderness which they craved as their sole reward, and if the great treasure of a mother's life is still spared to us, may we do for her feebleness what she did for ours."[7]

Prayer in the home and inner circle.—Quite as effective are prayers in behalf of restricted groups or of individuals. A man of particular religious insight offered prayer for a group of seekers kneeling at the altar in a revival meeting. The prayer was instructional and inspirational in character, giving an excellent interpretation of conversion and accenting the social and ethical aspect of the Christian life. Prayer at the family altar is likewise hortatory and preceptive. The plastic soul of the child receives lasting impressions from the family prayer. The family priest dedicates the child to God, implores divine help in his behalf, prays that he may be kept from the stain of sin, and that he may always choose the right. A young man says that the memory of the family prayer which his father made the morning he left the paternal roof to enter college, has strengthened him in many a critical hour, kept him from yielding to seductive and subtle temptations, and inspired him to live a life of usefulness and service.

[7] *The American Magazine*, December, 1910.

The preceptive element is prominent in the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus, recorded in John 17. It was offered in the presence of his disciples and evidently for their special benefit. It is both his valedictory and last will and testament. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." "And now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." He expresses a burning desire that his followers who are of divergent attitude may now be fused together in the higher purpose of his mission. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." How impressive these words, how they must have searched the apostles, how they must have lingered in memory!

It may be profitable to refer to a specific instance which supports the statement that the devotional relation creates a religious attitude in others, and shows that the supplications of a few, under zealous leadership, may, when the circumstances are auspicious, induce a spiritual revival spreading over a whole country. Following the collapse of Wall Street and the consequent business disturbances throughout our country in 1857, Jeremiah C. Lanphier, a lay missionary employed by a Dutch Reformed church in New York city, became impressed with the thought that an hour of prayer at noon would benefit depressed business men. Although he had advertised it somewhat, Lanphier

sat out the first half hour of the meeting alone. Six were present at the close of the hour. Lanphier kept a record of the increase in attendance. Twenty were present at the second meeting, forty at the third, one hundred at the fourth, after which the press was so great that the people could not be seated in one room. Overflow meetings were conducted in many churches, but lack of room made it impossible to accommodate the great crowds. Churches were thronged before the hour of prayer began, and hundreds stood in the streets while the meetings were being conducted. Soon the revival of religious concern spread to Jersey City, Hoboken, Paterson, Philadelphia, Boston, Albany, Troy, Schenectady, Rochester, Buffalo, Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, New Orleans, Vicksburg, Memphis, Saint Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and other cities.[8] The prayer life of a single man was in its social consequences like a match kindled in a vast forest when the grass is dry and the leaves are dead.

Even the tender social prayer for those who mourn the death of friends or relatives is quite dependent for its consolation upon its power to touch men. The bereaved are reminded of the existence of a benevolent God, the immortality of the soul, the eternal bliss of the righteous dead, the uncertainty of this life, and are urged to seek divine comfort and so to live that they may be reunited with the departed in the spirit world. To the point are prayers in rituals for the burial of the dead. The God of all comfort extends his

[8] Davenport, F. M.: *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, p. 6. The Macmillan Company.

consolation to the bereaved through the sympathy of his children for one another. Men are his messengers of solace. The exceedingly delicate ministry to the sorrowing is best accomplished in the fellowship of suffering expressed in prayer.

Prayers for the dead.—Prayers for the dead are regarded by many as a legitimate form of intercession. They are expressly commanded by Saint Augustine in his treatise *On the Care of the Dead.* Although he considered them without scriptural foundation, Luther hesitated to forbid them. He says, "Since the Scripture mentions nothing concerning them, I do not consider it a sin to pray thus, or the like: 'O God, if thou hast such relationship with souls that thou canst help them, be gracious to them,' and if this occurs once or twice, let that be enough." One writer of devotional literature makes the following plea for them: "And the blessed dead! Those happy souls who have departed thence in the Lord! They too come within the limitless range of intercessory prayer. May we pray for them? Three words will help us to answer the question: law, love and liberty. Law allows it; love commands it; liberty embraces it."[9]

The largest Protestant denominations in our country do not teach the duty and efficacy of prayers for the dead, being rather skeptical as to their value. It would, however, be rash to declare that they are without any effect. Their result, so far as can be determined, is purely reflexive. Such prayers tend to comfort those who mourn, to deepen the altruistic sentiments and to quicken belief in

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[9] Holmes, E. E.: *Prayer and Action*, p. 51. Longmans, Green & Co.

personal immortality. So far as we know the product is largely subconscious and personal.

THE ANSWER TO THE UNKNOWN COOPERATIVE PRAYER

It may be urged, and rightly so, that whereas in the above discussion of cooperative prayer the persons whose cooperation was solicited received information of the petition through the ordinary channels of communication, countless prayers are answered by persons wholly unaware of them. What is the interpretation of the social petition of which the answering self has no conscious knowledge? We may have recourse to telepathy, or normal but unrecognized mental processes, or a direct informational impression made by God. Some are disposed to distribute the transference of the unknown petitions among these three, assigning some to the immediate action of God, others to telepathy, and still others to reactions of the subconscious too slight to be perceived.

MENTAL TELEPATHY

Some believe telepathy to be the determining factor in the answering of the unknown intercession. The supporters of the theory of telepathy maintain that the mind may function apart from the nervous system and by virtue of that fact it is possible to read the thoughts of another at a distance and control them, perceive physical phenomena occurring no matter how far removed, and, say some enthusiastic advocates, see into the future, communicate with the dead, and do many other wonderful things.

The evidence for telepathic marvels is scien-

tifically untenable. The most competent students of borderland psychology reduce the so-called telepathic occurrences to a hopeless jumble of suggestion, unconscious perception, chance and coincidence, hallucinations and illusions, defective observation, exaggeration, imagination, muscle-reading, deliberate or unintentional fraud. They insist that an unbroken chain of sensations intermediates every perception. Thought is not a vibration of the ether set up by sensitized brain-cells, but an immaterial condition, a state of mind. This is not the place to give an extended account of the alleged marvels of telepathy. A psychological explanation of some typical cases, however, may be suggested.

Hallucinations and telepathy.—Some telepathic instances characterized by what is regarded as an external influence in the form of voices, visions, apparitions and kindred phenomena, are traceable to hallucinations and illusions. Seeming to have objective existence, the outward projection of inward states is especially treacherous. Professor Münsterberg describes an illuminating case of this kind. There came to him one night a stranger resolved to commit suicide if Professor Münsterberg could not help him. He related that he was a physician, but had ceased to practice because his brother across the ocean hated him and had him under telepathic influence, troubling him with mocking voices and impulses to foolish actions. For several days he had neither slept nor eaten; the only chance for life that he could see was that hypnotic power might overcome the mystical influence. On examination Professor Münsterberg discovered that the hallucination of voices was the

chief sympton of cocainism. In treating himself for a wound, the physician had misused cocaine. The vaporings of a diseased mentality became associated with his brother in Europe, until the telepathic notion grew to be an obsession. The Harvard professor hypnotized him, giving the posthypnotic suggestion that the patient take food, sleep, and a smaller dose of cocaine. For six weeks the unfortunate man was hypnotized daily. After ten days the cocaine habit was broken, after three weeks the voices were silent, and after that the remaining symptoms gradually disappeared. It was not until the end of the treatment that the theory of telepathy was rejected. After six weeks when he was normal again, the patient could hold his former telepathic absurdities in derision, but assured his benefactor that so vividly had he felt the distant influences that should they ever be experienced again he would be unable to resist the occult interpretation.[10]

Suggestion and telepathy.—That the element of suggestion accounts for many so-called cases of telepathy is, perhaps, most clearly demonstrated in the field of mental healing. Attention has already been directed to the fact that it is the faith state of the patient that is effective and not the effort of the healer to exert his curative influence at a distance. The actual giving of absent treatment is of no value as a remedial agency, the cure is wholly determined by the attitude of the patient. The effect of faith as such is revealed in cases of absent treatment which are successful even when the healer makes no effort to send forth his virtue to the sick who have confidence in his power.

[10] Münsterberg, Hugo: *Psychology and Life*, p. 242ff. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Mr. J. V. Coombs reports the case of a woman in South Chicago who requested her husband to consult a Christian Science healer in her behalf, as her physicians had pronounced her heart trouble incurable.[11] The healer proposed absent treatment, instructing the husband that at a time selected by the patient herself and reported to him, he would perform the miracle at a distance while she, dressed loosely, calmly concentrated her mind on being healed. The patient chose eight o'clock the following evening. The husband, a traveling man, left his home the next morning, fully intending to inform the healer of the hour selected by his wife, but found it impossible to deliver the message and take a certain train leaving the city. He did not instruct the healer. Believing that Christian Science absent treatment was being given, she meditated as directed at the time fixed by herself. A few days later she wrote her husband, who had not yet returned home, that she was well and had become a convert to Christian Science. When he returned he could contain himself no longer, and injudiciously disabused her mind of the error that the curist had given treatment at the time set by herself. The revelation was more than she could bear; she suffered a relapse and expired within ten hours. The unfortunate ending of this case speaks for itself.

Coincidence and chance.—The identity in time of two or more events seems to be an element in the answering of other unknown social prayers. A study of the inwardness of coincidence discloses conspiracies of circumstances which make the con-

[11] *Religious Delusions*, p. 142. The Standard Publishing Company.

currence of certain events possible and even inevitable. When two men invent the same mechanical device at about the same time, the coincidence may be traced to a need common enough to arouse the activity of a number of minds to meet it. Inventions do not outrun our wants. The dominant interests of the age, the necessities of the hour, the spirit of the times, all give birth to similar and simultaneous efforts. Coincidences are, therefore, inevitable.

Nor should the part of chance pure and simple be slighted. The concurrence of events innocent of causal relation is not only a possibility but an actual fact. Many telepathic marvels are reducible to the element of chance. In confirmation of this statement one may refer to recent findings of an experimenter in telepathy, Dr. J. E. Coover. His experimental study demonstrates anew that a person can have an absolutely groundless belief that another is staring at his back. This belief may be accounted for by a nervousness arising from natural anxiety as to the appearance of one's back, inhibition by the dictates of good breeding of the impulse to turn around to see if anyone is staring, the actual detection of another in the act of staring whose attention was attracted by signs of nervousness, and the tendency to attribute objective validity to subjective states in the form of sensations, imagery and impulses.

Ten college students made one hundred guesses each, as to whether they were being stared at during a fifteen-second interval. Each student, with eyes closed and shaded by the hand, sat with the back toward the experimenter. Whenever the latter

stared, he did so with conscious intensity, "willing" that the reagent "feel" it. A box containing a die was shaken, and when an odd number of spots was cast the reagent was stared at; when an even number was cast, the experimenter did not stare. Of the one thousand guesses 50.2 per cent were correct—an approximation to the probability figure when events are controlled by chance that warrants the conclusion that aside from hazard no cause need be assigned the right cases.[12]

The percentage of probability is, of course, a variable quantity, and in the realm of prayer, as elsewhere, it is not always high. But even when it is low the chance occurrences should not be misinterpreted. It is well to remember that the external world is so prodigal in the nature and variety of events productive of prayer that chance correspondences are bound to occur.

SUBCONSCIOUS SENSITIVITY AND UNRECOGNIZED PETITIONS

Although one may be unaware of receiving any message through sense-perception, the subconscious may take into account impressions imperceptible to clear consciousness. The range of our mental life is far more extensive than the psychic experiences of which we are aware and which are communicable. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that we are influenced by a multitude of subconscious registrations of which we are ignorant. It may be well to refer to a number of experiments which reveal their presence and power.

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[12] *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. xxiv, p. 570ff.

Experimental evidence for subconscious registration.—Experimentation in hypnotism frequently discloses large tracts of the mental life of which the subject is unaware. In the hypnotic condition he may recall dreams and other experiences beyond recollection in the normal state. Max Dessoir writes that on one occasion when several friends were in his room, a Mr. W. was reading to himself while the others were conversing. Some one mentioned the name of Mr. X. in whom Mr. W. was very much interested. Mr. W. at once raised his head to ask, "What was that about Mr. X.?" He had heard a familiar name, without having any knowledge of the previous conversation, as often happens. He consented to be hypnotized by Dessoir, and when deeply entranced repeated the substance of the entire conversation carried on while he was reading to himself and of which he professed absolute ignorance in the normal state.[13]

Experimental investigation in involuntary whispering has brought to light the fact that whenever we think, there is an initial and incipient movement of the vocal mechanism appropriate to the utterance of the thought, which although inaudible to the clear consciousness of another, may be subconsciously perceived. Two experimenters in telepathy, F. C. Hansen and A. Lehmann, were seated back to back. Tags marked with numbers from 19 to 99 were taken out of a bag haphazardly and held in mind by one of the men. The part of the other was to state which number was in the mind. It was soon discovered that when a number was

[13] See Sidis, Boris: *The Psychology of Suggestion*, p. 152. D. Appleton & Co.

thought of for some time there was a decided tendency on the part of the vocal muscles to inervate. Caution was exercised to keep the mouth closed and make no sound. A bystander could detect no vocalization. An examination of the results proved that mere chance did not account for the proportion of correct responses. Doubtless the transference of the ideas of number occurred through the sense of hearing, the involuntary whispering being subconsciously noted by observer.[14] Subsequent experiments confirm this conclusion. Mr. H. S. Curtis conducted experiments which recorded the automatic movements of the larynx when the Lord's Prayer was mentally recited.[15] That thought is accompanied by a jiggling of the larynx, indicating incipient oral expression which may be subconsciously recorded by another, seems well established.

Other experiments reveal the fact that our judgments are influenced by unrecognizable stimuli. Relying upon our unreasoned attitudes our conclusions are often more tenable than others reached by formal logic. The swift and dependable intuitions of the female mind excite universal wonder and admiration. Professor H. H. Donaldson records an experimental example of the effect of imperceptible factors. Two surfaces differing by a slight but measurable amount in the intensity of illumination, were compared, the observers being required to state which surface was the brighter. The difference was too slight to be recognized; hence the observers were compelled to guess. The unrecog-

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[14] See Wundt, W.: *Philosophische Studien*, vol. xi, part 4. The Macmillan Company.

[15] *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. xi, p. 2.

nizable difference was an effective element in determining the choice, for the brighter was correctly designated with much greater frequency.[16] The same principle operates in experiments in pitch discrimination. Two tuning forks differing slightly in the number of vibrations per second are struck in rapid succession and held before a resonator in the order determined by lot. The observer states whether the second sound is higher or lower than the first. A considerable number of trials are made. If the observer insists that he is unable to discriminate, he is encouraged to judge in accordance with any vague inner prompting he may feel. The percentage of correct responses when no difference is recognized and the observer relies upon his unreasoned attitude is so great that it is clear that imperceptible factors influence judgment.

Space does not permit the description of organic reactions of which we are ignorant, such as the afflux of blood to the brain during mental effort, or of the automatic movements of the body, head and hands in the direction of attention.[17] Enough has been said to sustain the contention that our feelings, thoughts, and actions are modified by our responses to stimuli too weak to be consciously noted. The fact that the range of the sensibility of the mental life is far more extensive than that of mere clear consciousness accounts for many telepathic instances. There is a subtle temptation to ascribe a response to unknown but subconsciously noted hints to a direct impression from another at a distance.

[16] Donaldson, H. H.: *The Growth of the Brain*, p. 292. Charles Scribner's Sons.
[17] See Jastrow, J.: *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, p. 307. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Subconscious registrations of prayer.—It is clear that a social prayer may make impressions too faint or indistinct to attract the attention of another, and yet be subconsciously gleaned and elaborated. Neither the self praying nor the one answering may be aware of the delicate process of hyperæsthesia, as it is called, and therefore neither is able to interpret the occurrence in terms of an orderly sequence. The unintended signals of the prayer are legion; spoken or written words are not the only sources of information at the disposal of the mind. A clasp of the hand, a touch upon the shoulder, a gesture, a facial expression, the tone of the voice may indicate interest in the religious life of another.

Doubtless some are more sensitive to weak stimuli than are others, and some are constantly giving more outward signs of inward states than are others. When friends are good transmitters and receivers of delicate impressions, silent conversations may occur; they may spend an entire evening together without speaking a word and part with the consciousness of having had a sociable visit. A lad frequently roamed over hill and dale with his boy chum, neither uttering a sentence for hours and still each found the society of the other congenial. When husband and wife are thus sympathetically related, few words are necessary for mutual understanding and appreciation.

A teacher recalls a former student of his with more than ordinary interest, for this mind was an exceedingly sensitive receiver and interpreter of the attitudes of his preceptors. His method of reciting a lesson was akin to that of a professional

medium giving information to a sitter. In reply to the question asked by the instructor it was his custom to parry and temporize by asking a counter and leading question: did the teacher refer to this or that? If the instructor answered, matters were materially expedited for the student. If an answer was denied, he began to skirmish, moving cautiously in the form of generalities equally applicable to a multitude of things and having his eyes riveted upon the face of the teacher to detect the shadow of a trace of approval or disapproval. Thus guiding and guarding himself, he retreated whenever he felt himself upon treacherous ground, and advanced boldly whenever he felt sure of his position, uniformly succeeding in making a tolerable recitation, although the instructor was exercising precaution to be noncommittal, and the student himself had come with the vaguest conception of the lesson material. This sensitive soul possessed the almost uncanny power of compelling the preceptor to recite for him.

It does not seem unreasonable to conclude that transmitters of prayer, especially those who unintentionally radiate the signs and symbols of the secret devotional life, are frequently rewarded by others who have no conscious knowledge of having absorbed the petition. In fact, a highly impressionable and socialized person may respond to a subconsciously noted and assimilated petition more generously and graciously than to the one of which he is pointedly aware. The hint dropped unawares and subconsciously taken is likely to be more effective than the consciously recognized petition. Persons of the combative disposition exhibit a

readiness to set their wills against the direct and the known appeal, but a sensitiveness and a responsiveness to what they assume to be original impulses. The pathway which a petition made in the closet may take may be labyrinthian, and it is seldom if ever possible to predict or detect how or when it will travel, what its destination will be, and what it will accomplish.

When we add to subconscious activity the many other means of imparting and receiving information, the possibilities of disseminating the social prayer seem beyond computation. Such things as the locomotive and steamship, the telephone and telegraph, the mail service and newspaper, the public school and market place have all brought men into close relations and multiplied the channels of intercommunication. The secret whispered in the chamber is proclaimed from the housetops.

DIRECT IMPRESSIONS BY GOD

It is affirmed that when an intercession touches the heart of God he sometimes influences the person whom the prayer is designed to move, without any reference to the ordinary human means of communication. Since God is the author and sustainer of the universe, it does not become us to deny him such method. It is not for us to impose our limitations upon him. There should be no disposition to question the power of God to impress the mind of man immediately. In fact, the doctrine of the immanence of God, which underlies this entire study of prayer, implying as it does that he is constantly prompting man from within, is

wholly compatible with the mystical account of the transmission of the unknown petition from one self to another. It is, of course, impossible to determine to a finality whether a response is directly inspired by God, or indirectly by other subconsciously acquired intimations.

Not that such an immediate impression can be dissected and labeled by scientific processes. It lies outside the domain for which psychology is responsible. A transcendental impulse is not material for the psychologist but for the theologian and the philosopher. It belongs to the realm of relations not reducible to other and more basic terms by the technic of science. A mystical impression is an interior illumination and urge, a matter of religious consciousness and intuition, which is not subject to the methods and classifications of psychology. After science has abstracted all that it can from the prayer experience an irreducible residuum remains, a relation of God and man too deep and intimate to be analyzed and defined.

The Christian religion is the organization of life in its totality in accordance with the Fatherhood of God. It teaches that a personal and direct relation between God as Father and men as sons is not only possible but imperative. This would be an orphaned world indeed if God could not and did not sensitize the conscience of man. If the human personality were in every instance thrown upon its own resources, how pitifully inadequate the entire scheme of things would be! Man's own ideas and unaided efforts cannot carry him far. To yield to the impression of God within is to give the course of life a point and a direction which

man, relying upon his own reason and volition, cannot achieve. The prayer relation draws upon mystic sources of wisdom which, although defying scientific investigation and description, attest their validity in the moral and social progress of humanity.

SUMMARY

Springing from religious motives, the prayers of solicitation for things and personal effort enlist those whose strength and willingness can accomplish what the petitioner himself is unable, alone and unaided, to bring to pass. Such prayers tend to form partnerships of personalities for the furtherance of enterprises of social significance. They have a socializing influence. They discover and impress the persons who can contribute to social betterment. Prayer action and prayer reaction fuse in fellowship and common achievement.

Other prayers studied in this chapter culminate in an altered personality rather than in material contributions or other forms of benevolence. They are not made to win active support for a cause, but to instruct and recreate others. They are comforting and cheering, didactic and invigorating. The process of conversion, the elimination of evil, the cure of a disease, divine guidance, in short whatever may be achieved by the individual himself, may, in auspicious circumstances, be induced in the lives of others. The petitioner has his reward in the reconstruction of the personality of concern to him. It would be hard to imagine more disinterested motives than those which prompt this form of cooperative prayer. It is evident that

such petitions beget in another prayers for a more victorious and morally competent self.

Prayers made within the hearing of others or directly carried to others by the ordinary avenues of intercommunication are their own appeal. That such impacts are reenforced by the energy of God in man is defensible and inevitable in the light of the doctrine of the immanence of God. The unrecognized petition may be conveyed to its destination in one of two ways: it may be subconsciously garnered and elaborated, or it may be directly impressed upon the mind of man by God himself. In either case clairvoyant traits of the human personality are for the present excluded as not yet scientifically demonstrated. Prayers of cooperation, as motivated and employed by the religious consciousness, assume the nature of religious-social suggestions.

A petition transferred as a divine impulse or in any other way, does not ride roughshod over the will of another. Indeed, the contrary will of another may defeat the purpose for which the prayer was made. The creativeness of the social petition, no matter how transmitted, is determined by the cooperation and resources of the self it touches. Prayer is not a means of canceling the moral responsibilities of others. The statement, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," expresses all that God will and all that man can do. Prayer solicits and invites, encourages and urges, enlightens and admonishes, but so long as the self resists the impact and appeal of it, it remains answerless. Not even when he impinges upon the spirit of man without sensory mediation does God presume to

determine. God lets the rain fall upon the unjust as well as upon the just. For this reason the prayer for rain is confusing.

Undiscovered connections.—On the other hand, it is sheer scientific bigotry to assert that answer to prayer outside the scope of personal influence is impossible. There may be higher laws of which we as yet know nothing which determine the answer now regarded as objective. Many events of nature once supposed to be direct departures from the usual and orderly scheme of the world have disclosed their normal connections and been linked with other like uniform sequences. The possibility of an incandescent electric light was once scoffed at, but it has long ago become an accomplished fact. The range of the unknown is vaster than that of the explored regions; hence modesty becomes us. While defying our present methods of analysis and classification certain objective answers to prayer may some day be referred to laws of which at present we are wholly ignorant. What now appears to be a conflict with natural law may in the end reveal itself to students of deeper insight and more varied experience, as the outcome of a higher order.

God and nature.—It is the Christian's belief that since God made the world as it is, he is able to depart from any customary method of expressing himself. What he can make he can break. While there can hardly be a question as to God's power to suspend or interfere with his customary activities, there has been decided objection to such intervention. One writer feels so strongly that he makes the statement that a God who creates

a universe according to a plan which he must change or temporarily abandon in order to accomplish his purposes would be limited in wisdom and resources. A deviation from the law-abiding order of nature he regards as a makeshift, a way out of a difficulty, a desperate measure, something which supplies a want in the scheme of things. The world has not been so fashioned that by it all the divine ends are achieved. "God encounters an obstacle within his own order of nature. It is as if there were two Gods—one who is active during the ordinary course of things, and another who, in particular cases, corrects the work of the former."[4]

On the other hand, others, far from sensing any limitation in an occurrence which conflicts with what we know about natural law, are disposed to glory in a God who refuses to be held in check by his ordinary way of governing the universe. Far from displaying a weakness in God, events not reducible to what we call law reveal his sovereignty. They believe that when a situation is serious enough to warrant it, God does actually exercise his power to halt or disturb the usual processes of nature. They do not discriminate against petitions answers to which might entail a break in the natural order. Although conscious of their own lack of wisdom, they pray that not their will but God's, be done.

The higher ministry of prayer.—The atmosphere is cleared when we raise the question, Are the ends of life physical, or moral and religious? If it be granted that the ends of the race are spiritual, it becomes clear that prayer in furthering the

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[4] Höffding, H.: *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 29. The Macmillan Company.

fundamental purpose does not directly involve the material world. Prayer as a means of spiritual culture has no responsibility in the physical universe. To say the least, it is not the highest function of prayer to invade the material universe and to work havoc and confusion simply to gratify an unsophisticated and unspiritual petitioner.

To confine prayer to moral issues is to forestall perplexity. Many a sensitive but misguided person has been unable to unlearn what he has been taught about the willingness of God to abrogate the laws of the physical world, without an unfortunate and a needless loss of confidence in religion itself. An author of a devotional study records the case of a woman whose spiritual life suffered permanent injury because her petition for the recovery of her daughter, incurably ill, was ungranted. She had been taught that faith invariably moves God to change or reverse the operations of nature.[5] One of Dr. F. O. Beck's correspondents reports a girlhood experience which further illustrates the confusion arising from misleading teaching. "One evening, just when leaving school, I tore a page in a new geography of which I thought a great deal. I placed it in the desk greatly worried, and leaving the room sadly, I recalled that the teacher had taught that God could do anything, so I just prayed that he would mend my torn book. Many times that evening and the next morning I asked him in prayer to mend the page. I hastened to school early and went at once to my desk to find to my sorrow that the leaf was still torn."[6]

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[5] McCormick, C. W.: *The Heart of Prayer*, p. 1. The Methodist Book Concern.
[6] *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, vol. ii, p. 118.

Many men feel that it is more religious and in harmony with the divine will to adjust themselves to the laws of nature than it is to try to set them aside by the power of prayer. Instead of praying for rain they irrigate the arid regions, plant trees to modify the atmospheric conditions, and discover and apply the principles of dry farming. Instead of trying to deliver themselves from a plague of grass-hoppers by means of prayer, intelligent men are plowing under the larva and preventing the propagation of the noxious insects. Instead of relying solely upon prayer to arrest the ravages of an epidemic of typhoid fever, they submit their drinking water and milk to a scientist that they may combat the malignant scourge at its source. They appropriate the skill of the surgeon to set a broken bone or to extract a bullet embedded in the flesh. They consider the employment of natural means to attain material ends an obligation which should not be shifted to where it does not properly belong. It is God himself who is creatively active in natural processes, and it is therefore positively sinful to be unwilling to conform to his established order.

The devout mind is disposed to draw lessons of spiritual import from material disaster. In its scale of values the eternal is highest and the temporal, lowest. Bishop William A. Quayle finds in the economic pressure of a drought not so much an occasion for a petition for rain as an opportunity to bring home to men the barrenness and unfruitfulness of their own lives. He expresses this sentiment: "We pray for bounteous harvests on the plowed lands of the soul, where we have had scant

crops so long, so long, so pitifully long. We have been barren fields, or nigh that. Dew have we had and rain and sunlight passing fair and sweet, and God hath been with us, but we heeded not. We have grown shrubs where we should have grown trees, and scrawny harvests where we could, aye, and should have been burdened with a yield of an hundredfold. . . . Give to us great soul-crops of love and peace and joy, and a sound mind and an equanimity which never sours with discontent, we pray in Christ, our Master."[7]

SUMMARY

Prayer helps man to help himself. It inspires him to meet material obstacles with insight and courage. It sifts the facts of life and arranges them in their proper order. It is a factor in subduing and subordinating the forces of nature to religious purposes. To be sure, prayer does not relieve us of some burdens, but it does infinitely more when it helps us to bear them. It constructs a personality that rises above vicissitudes of time and sense. Paul prays three times that a physical handicap, a thorn in the flesh, which is an impediment in his missionary labors, be removed. Although his actual petition is ungranted he is given courage and patience to bear his trial, and becomes the greater man for the discipline. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." [8]

[7] Quayle, William A.: *The Climb to God*, p. 162. The Methodist Book Concern.
[8] 2 Corinthians 12: 9.

CHAPTER VIII

UNGRANTED PETITIONS

A POPULAR writer of devotional studies makes no secret of the futility of many prayers, saying: "Probably it is accurate to say that thousands of prayers go up and bring nothing down. This is certainly true. Let us say it just as bluntly and as plainly as it can be said."[1] Not all are as ready and frank to admit the failures of the prayer relation. Some assert that God hears all prayers, but answers only those which are in accord with his will and for the spiritual welfare of the petitioner. They affirm that "no" is as real an answer as "yes." Nevertheless, it must be confessed that myriads of prayers are unanswered in the sense that the object of the petition is never forthcoming.

Many and varied are the explanations made for the ungranted petition. We have had occasion elsewhere to refer to the fact that many attribute unanswered prayers to want of faith, indefiniteness, lack of perseverance, and improper objects of prayer. It is also maintained that many prayers are indirectly answered in that the insignificant favor asked for is ungranted in order that a higher good may be bestowed. Often the form of the petition is denied, but the substance is granted. A passage in Saint Augustine's *Confessions* describes

[1] Gordon, S. D.: *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, p. 67. Fleming H. Revell Company.

his mother, Monica, praying all one night in a chapel in Africa that God would not let her son sail for Italy. She wanted Augustine to become a Christian. She did not want him to escape her direct influence. If under her care he resisted the appeal of Christianity, what would he be in Italy, the land of licentiousness and alluring temptation? But he sailed for Italy and there he was converted under the labors of Ambrose. The intent of the mother's prayer was realized in the country from which her petition would have kept him.

But since prayer is in part a human enterprise it is not surprising that it often fails to accomplish the immediate purpose of its maker. Prayer is a human and a divine process, an act in which God and man cooperate. Now, God is the constant and dependable partner in the transaction, always prompting man from within to achieve the wholeness and the fullness of life, and ever expressing himself in those uniformities which we call his laws. It is man who is the variable factor, his infirmities and self-will often interfering with the answering of his prayers. The unanswered prayer is not the failure of God to keep faith with man, but it is the failure of man to adjust himself to the requirements of God.

UNGRANTED PERSONAL PETITIONS

Prayers for things outside the range of personal and social influence have already been considered in a chapter devoted to objective answers;[2] it will, therefore, not be necessary to discuss them here.

[2] Chapter VII.

In accordance with the psychological classification of prayer adopted in the preceding chapters attention will first be called to typical reasons for ungranted personal petitions.

An uneasy conscience.—Now, since all true prayer is essentially reverent and serious, and the expression of the soul's deepest religious desires, it is normally impossible to maintain the devotional attitude against the consciousness of moral defects. With rare penetration into the heart of the matter, Mr. Phelps writes: "It does not require what the world pronounces a great sin to break up the serenity of the soul in its devotional hours. The experience of prayer has delicate complications. A little thing, secreted there, may dislocate its mechanism and arrest its movement."[3] The sacred writer senses the effect of iniquity and describes it in his own unique way: "The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."[4] "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."[5] To be sure, when the eradication of evil is itself the burden of the petition, the delicate mechanism of the devotional life is unhampered.

In actual practice the moral standard is not inflexible and fixed for all time. Moral requirements necessarily reflect the current conceptions of right and wrong. Social judgment to a large extent determines the content of personal conscience. What was regarded as right yesterday may be found wrong to-day. There is in both the race and in the individual a progressive moral revelation.

[3] Phelps, A.: *The Still Hour*, p. 32. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Company.
[4] Proverbs 15: 29.
[5] Isaiah 1: 15.

A case in point is the changed attitude of thousands toward the use of spirituous liquors. Where once the moderate use of alcoholic beverages was not only tolerated, but ardently defended, there may be to-day an unwavering stand for total abstinence. It follows that what would be an unethical petition for one would not necessarily be so for another, and what would leave the prayer relation of one undisturbed could create a breach in the devotional life of another.

The seriousness with which ethical and religious hindrances to prayer are regarded varies with their power over the individual. Whatever has become a moral or religious obligation, be it ever so trivial or important, must be sacredly respected, lest the inner harmony of the prayer life be disturbed. The prayer must be in accord with the religious beliefs of the petitioner. Miss Strong cites the experience of a young man converted under the labors of Finney, the great evangelist. When Finney's preaching was reaching many it became the custom for seekers to retire to the woods to pray. As a rule, they returned rejoicing. Although this young man spent a whole night on his knees in prayer, and actually knelt in a mud-puddle, to persuade himself that it was not false pride that restrained him, the unwillingness to go into the woods became such a point of tension as utterly to distract him. After weeks of struggle, he yielded, retired to the woods and quickly resolved the conflict through prayer. Be it said to the credit of Finney that he regarded the matter of praying in the woods as of no consequence, and that in this particular he differed radically from many other

revivalists who make compliance with certain forms and methods a prerequisite to salvation.[6]

Theological struggles.—In our Christian civilization the attitude toward the fundamental doctrines as set forth by the various religious denominations profoundly affects the prayer experience. To reject a cardinal belief, while subconsciously convinced of its truth, is to bring about a spiritual chaos which endures until the fullest assent is accorded the disturbing article of faith. There are many cases recorded which demonstrate that petitioners for the conversion experience have prayed without success until the deity of Christ has been acknowledged.

Bishop Robert McIntyre's conversion is illuminating. He writes: "Lying prone at an altar in a sanctuary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Saint Louis, I was convicted after days of inward conflict, completely humbled in spirit. I feared, struggled, agonized. My will was broken, my heart riven, my flesh cold, my breath choked. I could barely live on the border-line of consciousness. I had denied the deity of Christ, and still blinded by mental and moral perversity, I shrank from the one great final leap to the cross. As I brokenly moaned the Deist's invocation, 'O God, save me,' a silver-haired saint ceased singing in the band near by, kneeled beside the chancel rail, listened to my piteous cry, saw the knot that was strangling my spiritual life, and swiftly loosed it with the words, 'Ask God to save you for Jesus' sake.' In desperation I flung all my infidelity from

[6] Strong, A. L.: *The Psychology of Prayer*, p. 106. University of Chicago Press. For a description of growth in prayer discrimination, see page 50ff.

me, hung all my hope on his holy name, called him by faith my Lord forever, and said the sentence which was my soul's solemn and eternal committal to the Most High in his appointed way. I took the omnipotent words from her, dipped them deep in my heart's blood, and slowly as one who faces doom and has no other plea, sobbed out, 'O God, for Jesus' sake, save me.' While yet the Name was on my lips a light sweetened all my being, the pressure of a mountain of guilt lifted, a stream of mercy flowed around me, smiles broke through my tears, and stammeringly, wonderingly with holy awe upon me I tried to tell it, as I have done ever since."

Temperamental disqualifications.—Many persons are temperamentally disqualified from receiving the dramatic and striking answers to prayer which they so earnestly covet and so firmly expect. Professor Coe, as indicated elsewhere, has shown the vital relation of temperament to religious experiences. His statistics demonstrate that when religious experiences in terms of voices and visions occur, the element of sensibility predominates and the persons are either of the sanguine or melancholic temperament. Those who are highly emotional and imaginative in general are the ones most likely to receive startling answers to prayer in the form of outward projections of inward states. The writer has studied with absorbing interest a young man whose religious life is characterized by emotional excitement and dramatic occurrences. It is noticeable that his whole life is significantly influenced by these temperamental characteristics. One day, after an arduous but fruitless pursuit of game,

he finally succeeded in bringing down a small animal. His joy knew no bounds, and was expressed by wild leaps into the air and the firing of his gun, to the imminent peril of his fellow hunters.

On the other hand, many who expect striking and emotional religious transformations in response to prayer are disappointed because their prominent mental trait is the intellect, and the choleric temperament obtains. It is a matter of regret that the experiences of the highly emotional and suggestible have been adopted as standards by some of the religious denominations. The efforts of many genuinely religious persons to conform their religious experiences to the type in favor with their respective churches, despite temperamental disqualifications, are truly pathetic and often lead to a tragic revolt against religion itself. Professor Coe quotes a person who expected, but for temperamental reasons failed to obtain, a striking conversion. The disappointed person says, "Often I arose from my knees almost mad at myself for praying after having prayed so often without results."[7] It is well to bear in mind that the peculiar constitution of the mind determines the form of the effect of the petition.

Lack of perseverance.—Doubtless, many unanswered prayers are due to a lack of perseverance until one feels prompted from within to cease conscious striving and to surrender to the religious forces. In the language of prayer, one should "pray through." The expression is suggestive. Many writers of devotional literature emphasize it. One author says: "Too many fail to pray

[7] Coe, G. A.: *The Spiritual Life*, p. 149. The Methodist Book Concern.

through. If the request is not granted at the first or second asking, they cease praying and say, 'Perhaps it isn't God's will,' and this they call submission. Dr. Torrey calls it 'spiritual laziness.' "[8] Another writes: "The strong man of prayer, when he starts to pray for a thing, keeps on praying until he prays it through, and obtains what he seeks."[9]

The regular procedure is to continue the prayer until one feels ripe for self-surrender. Sometimes there is a temptation to yield the self in response to pressure from without before one intuitively feels prepared. Premature self-surrender under such a social pressure as an exciting revival is doubtless responsible for many subsequent relapses. Before the new life has fully matured and is of its own accord seeking control, self-surrender is worse than useless. When the product of prayer is ready to report itself it may be trusted to do so without external pressure. The teaching of Jesus as set forth in his parables of the importunate widow,[10] and the midnight visitor,[11] is a remarkable plea for perseverance in prayer until the answer comes. From the point of view of psychology, it is not difficult to appreciate the necessity of a faith which knows no respite until it has served its purpose.

Negative suggestion.—What we have called negative suggestion is another prolific source of prayer failure. In the discussion of suggestion it was pointed out that, in order to be most effective, the suggested idea should be positive in form. Since

[8] Biederwolf, W. G.: *How Can God Answer Prayer?* p. 216. Fleming H. Revell Company.
[9] Torrey, R. A.: *How to Pray*, p. 66. Fleming H. Revell Company.
[10] Luke 18: 1–8.
[11] Luke 11: 5–13.

whatever is in the mind tends to express itself, only what one desires to attain should engage the attention. To hold in mind vices which it is the purpose of prayer to expel is to imperil the success of prayer.

Too much stress cannot be placed upon the central fact of suggestion. An idea, attended to, generates belief in itself and, unless inhibited, expresses itself. The fundamental principle of suggestion rests back upon the doctrine that all consciousness is motor. Doubtless, too many prayers are worse than useless because the mind is not filled with the ideas and ideals of positive virtues. Since the mental imagery of the undesirable has a tendency to intrench it the more firmly, let the liar pray for the spirit of truthfulness, the thief for the inner principle of honesty, the sick for health. Let the growth of positive virtues eliminate evil.

On the other hand, it must not be inferred that no prayer clothed in negative terms is effectual. It is conceivable that in some cases a negative prayer may act as a means whereby the personality is purged of unwholesome elements. A case in point is the prayer of confession which will be studied in the next chapter. We shall see that mental states which are at variance with the moral standards and which are not released through prayer or some other form of confession create a subconscious disturbance which may bring on hysteria. The spiritual mind may be intrusted with the delicate task of determining for itself when prayer should be employed as a channel of discharge for morbid inner states. Such a mind will likewise follow, even in its prayers, the advice of

Saint Paul to think on "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are of good report."

Vain repetitions.—Many prayers are ineffectual because they are vain reiterations, repetitions that lack the vital breath of desire. Hypocrisy, mental indolence, lack of initiative, habit, and the perfunctory observance of the externals of religion, are some of their sources. Mr. Phelps says, "Perhaps even so slight a thing as the pain of resistance to the momentum of a habit will be found to be the most distinct reason we can honestly give for having prayed yesterday or to-day."[12] Although the Lord's Prayer was given to counteract the tendency to use vain repetitions, it itself has frequently become upon the lips of thousands a meaningless form.

When the act of prayer becomes purely automatic, it may generate vitality and drain off through its open functional channels any distracting impressions which tend to interrupt its reiteration; the vain repetitions as automatism set energy free which may be expended in attending to something wholly foreign to the spirit of devotion. Instead of stimulating the subconscious in the direction of the answer to the prayer framed by the lips, the insincere or thoughtless petition may arouse activities positively inimicable to the higher life. As an example one may refer to the misuse of the rosary. While praying under the guidance of this mechanical device, the petitioner may automatically reiterate the series of Pater Nosters, Ave Marias, and Glorias, and be all the time meditating something at the farthest remove from the "mysteries."

[12] Phelps, A.: *The Still Hour*, p. 13. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Company.

It will be seen that the vain repetition turns on itself and may become instrumental in subverting the moral life.

Periods of spiritual dryness.—Many prayers made during periods of spiritual dryness are unanswered. The course of life may for some time continue to be so even and uneventful that prayer, if offered at all, has its rise in a sense of religious obligation and not in an emergency. An unbroken and uneventful course of living offers too little occasion for prayer; hence the praying which does occur is either almost automatic or a painful effort to hold in mental focus an idea inherently too tame readily to attract and grip the attention. Times of spiritual dryness occasion much dejection and depression among earnest religious souls who ascribe them to hardness and unbelief of heart. The very anguish and torture of mind which such persons suffer in consequence of their inability to maintain a keen interest in the prayer life against periods of religious drought is in itself proof that what they lack is not belief but fresh experiences. It is only natural that the crises rather than the uneventful periods of life give rise to most of the effectual prayers. Therefore devout souls should not despair when times of spiritual dearth come. The tendency of effective prayer is to vary directly with the vicissitudes of life. From this point of view it is perfectly intelligible why the rosary is considered so essential to devotion by those who lead the secluded and monotonous existence of the cloister.

Lack of rest periods.—If the prayer made involves a complex subconscious process and hence a long series of repetitions, occasional periods of rest

should be observed. The answer comes more quickly in some cases than in others. One is warranted in anticipating that under normal conditions the time consumed in answering the petition varies directly with the complexity of the object. The petition for the calming of the excited personality may be answered instantaneously, but the prayer of a sin-sick soul for regeneration requires frequent reiteration and a much longer period of time. It requires less time to induce a momentary state of confidence than it does to construct a new self. It is clear that rest periods are out of the question in prayers which are answered almost immediately, but they should occur during the growth of a complex answer.

While an active faith is straining in the general direction of an intricate prayer response, innumerable hindering tendencies are at the same time being built up. If no rest is taken, the inhibiting processes are likely to become so developed as to undo the work in the right direction. During a period of rest the less firmly intrenched misdirected activities tend to atrophy, while the more deeply ingrained correct impressions mature. The time required for the subconscious growth of many objects of prayer doubtless accounts for some cases of so-called delayed answers. Many seekers for peace through conversion respond to the appeals of two or more revivals with intervening periods of rest during the summer, before the self is actually reborn. One such person states that she was unconverted in a certain revival because she was not yet ripe for the experience.

Want of faith.—As has been repeatedly stated,

the most frequent reason given for unanswered prayer is want of faith. The apostle says: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."[14] Lack of faith is unquestionably a primary cause of failure. In order to be kept burning, the flame of faith must be constantly fed. The judicious reading of prayer literature, the testimony of others whose prayer life is inspirational, the recollection of positive past experiences all nourish the faith state. It will hardly be necessary to repeat that without faith, both active and receptive, effective prayer is out of the question.

UNGRANTED SOCIAL PETITIONS

Prayers the answering of which includes the cooperation of one or more other selves, tend to construct and employ a process of social suggestion. Representative psychological features which undermine the effect of such prayers should receive the careful attention they merit by all to whom the religious life is fundamental. Ignorance of the bounds which a wise ruler of all has set for the social petition is the occasion of much religious confusion and skepticism.

Lack of information.—It will be recalled that the success of prayers for the cooperation of another involves social suggestion. In all such prayers two extremes invite failure—entire ignorance of them on the part of the person to be influenced and too direct intimation of them. Where there

[14] James 1: 6, 7.

is no hint received there can be no social suggestion. Although the avenues through which we receive information are countless, it is safe to say that many social prayers are unanswered because the proper persons have no knowledge of them. There is much to be said for the small boy who prayed for Christmas presents in a voice perfectly audible to his rather deaf grandmother who was hearing his evening prayer. Although he was addressing the heavenly throne, he was conscious that it was of the utmost importance that his grandmother knew just what he wanted for Christmas.

Of course the mere fact that an unbroken chain of communication exists between the petitioner and the self upon which the answer depends is not a pledge of reciprocity. The suggestibility of the receiver of the prayer determines his willingness to answer it. Since women are more suggestible than men, one would expect them to respond to social prayers more readily than men do.[15] In men the intellect is more prominent, the emotions are focused on definite objects and at specific times, their resistance to influences from without is greater. In women sensibility is more pronounced, the emotions are more constant, docile, and diffused; they yield more readily to external influences. In view of these differences in mental structure, the opinion is volunteered that women are more likely to respond to the appeal of social prayers than men.

Direct suggestions.—On the other hand, too much and too direct information is prone to result in counter suggestion. This is especially true of the

[15] See Ellis, Havelock: *Man and Woman*, Chap. XII. Charles Scribner's Sons.

male sex with its marked tendency to resist ordinary external pressure. Indirect social suggestion in the form of mere hints and intimations is likely to induce the highest state of suggestibility. Dr. Sidis formulates what he calls the law of normal or waking suggestion as follows: "Normal suggestibility varies as indirect suggestion, and inversely as direct suggestion."[16] In other words, "In the normal state a suggestion is more effective the more indirect it is, and in proportion as it becomes direct, it loses its efficacy."[17] Among his examples of indirect suggestion, the following may be quoted: "My friend Mr. A. is absent-minded; he sits near the table, thinking of some abstruse mathematical problem that baffles all his efforts to solve it. Absorbed in the solution of that intractable problem, he is blind and deaf to what is going on around him. His eyes are directed on the table, but he appears not to see any of the objects there. I put two glasses of water on the table, and at short intervals make passes in the direction of the glasses —passes which he seems not to perceive; then I resolutely stretch out my hand, take one of the glasses, and begin to drink. My friend follows suit—dreamily he raises his hand, takes the glass and begins to sip, awakening fully to consciousness when a good part of the tumbler is emptied."[18] To tell the person openly and plainly what is expected of him is to invite the failure of the suggestion: hence, some object is produced or some appropriate gesture or movement is made, and these in their own subtle way tell him what to do.

[16] Sidis, Boris: *The Psychology of Suggestion*, p. 55. D. Appleton & Co.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Applying the law of normal suggestion to the prayer relation, which has for its purpose the control of others, it is evident that when a mere inkling is sown into a receptive mind, the harvest is likely to be much more abundant than when much information is directly given and received. Religious interest may be expressed in a look or attitude of concern, a warm handshake, or between the lines of a letter. We have observed how the personality responds to the immediate stimuli too delicate to be consciously noted. To pray at a person is, then, to subject the social petition to needless opposition. The most auspicious circumstances for the influence of the social prayer obtain when the petitioner himself and the self to be reached associate under normal conditions and no conscious and direct effort is made. The sensibility of the subconscious may be relied upon to interpret the hints of the prayer and the delicate manifestations of the religious interest of the petitioner.

The outcome of the social prayer is relatively dependent upon the ability of the transmitter of religious influence to give subtle indications of his inward states, and upon the receiver's capacity to interpret the delicate impressions and his suggestibility to them. Some persons are notoriously inefficient transmitters; a stolid exterior hides their inner lives. Others are all the time exhibiting the tell-tale signs of what is moving them; their outward manifestations of inward and invisible activities are unmistakable. The difference in receivers is fully as marked. Some are unusually receptive and place great reliance upon their impressions and intuitions. Others belong to the unfortunate class

of persons who seemingly cannot take a hint. When a social prayer proceeds from an expressive transmitter and reaches an impressionable and responsive receiver the conditions for a positive result are favorable.

CHAPTER IX

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION AND PRAISE

Prayer is infinitely more than a petition for special favors. Much of it is devotional rather than petitional. Prayer implies a reverential attitude, a mode of self-expression, meditation on life's deepest problems, a deepening of right purpose, and a communion with the Invisible. It may be an end in itself rather than a means to an end. This type of prayer relation we call devotional, as distinguished from the petitional. It embraces the prayers of confession, adoration, worship, thanksgiving, consecration, submission, communion, and aspiration. The first four mentioned are structurally related. Petitional prayer contributes something of value to the self, while confession, adoration, worship, and thanksgiving relieve the self of urges and impulses. One type of prayer constructs a more unified and morally competent personality by a process of addition; the other, by a process of subtraction. The key to the psychological description of the latter is psychoanalysis.

PSYCHOANALYSIS

It is exceedingly difficult to give a concise and precise definition of the word "psychoanalysis." The term does not denote a specific manifestation of the mind like memory or emotion, or a mental structure like suggestion. As the word itself indi-

cates, psychoanalysis involves an analysis or a dissection of the mental life. It is a method of discovering and terminating morbid states of mind, a treatment employed in the cure of certain nervous disorders. In its wider application, however, psychoanalysis is a mode of procedure for delving down into the depths of human nature and bringing to light the motives and the past experiences which underlie them and which determine present attitudes and actions. Originally psychoanalysis was restricted to the cure of certain diseases, but now it is extended to such phenomena as wit, dreams, the artistic temperament, fairy tales, folklore, mythology. In its essential features it is mental surgery laying bare unfulfilled wishes and desires, which though unexpressed and for the most part unknown by the subject, definitely influence and modify conduct.

For countless ages man has sought and found relief and satisfaction through self-expression. The racial experience is expressed in the phrase, "Confession is good for the soul." The inelegant statement that it is a relief to get certain things "out of our system" voices the same truth. Religious leaders recommend confession to one another, to the pastor, or to God. Family quarrels which do not originate in a controversy touching the fundamentals of marital relations often tend to clear the domestic atmosphere. Some persons discharge their wrath and indignation against a trying correspondent in a violent letter which is consigned to the wastebasket immediately after its composition. Criminals at large, crushed by the weight of unconfessed crimes, frequently surrender themselves to

the police, preferring the sentence of the court to the qualms of conscience. Pent-up emotions escape through vocal expression and grief exhausts itself in cries and tears. Shakespeare in *Macbeth* makes Malcolm say to Macduff, who has been told that his wife and babies have been murdered:

"Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break."

Wordsworth, in his poem "Intimations of Immortality," says:

"To me alone there came a thought of grief,
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong."

Tennyson, in one of the most melodious of the lyrics scattered throughout "The Princess," introduces a like conception:

"Home they brought her warrior dead;
She nor swooned nor uttered cry;
All her maidens watching, said,
'She must weep or she will die.'

"Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
'Sweet, my child, I live for thee.'"

THE RISE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

The experience which men for ages found serviceable was at last systematically studied. Its leading principles received scientific definition at a comparatively recent date.[1] As was to be expected,

[1] For a popular statement of the history, theory and practice of various schools, see Tridon, Andre: *Psychoanalysis*. B. W. Huebsch.

researches and findings in this difficult field resulted in various interpretations and rival schools of theory and practice. To trace these diverging developments would carry us too far away from present purposes and requirements. Nevertheless, a statement of the origin and rise of psychoanalysis will throw light upon the nature and value of this method.

Aristotelian katharsis.—Among the precursors of the modern psychoanalysis none is of more importance than Aristotle, the Greek philosopher. He was acquainted with the fact that when certain mental states are released the personality is purified and refined. This process he calls *katharsis*, and perccives it as the function of tragedy. He defines tragedy as follows: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper *katharsis*, or purgation, of these emotions."[2] We are here concerned with his theory of *katharsis*. While the meaning of *katharsis* has baffled many of Aristotle's interpreters, the following exposition is illuminative: "In the medical language of the school of Hippocrates it [*katharsis*] strictly denotes the removal of a painful or disturbing element from the organism, and hence the purifying of what remains, by the elimination of alien matter. Applying this to tragedy, we observe that the feelings of pity and fear in real life contain a

[2] Translated by Butcher, S. H.: *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, p. 240. The Macmillan Company.

morbid and disturbing element. In the process of tragic excitation they find relief, and the morbid element is thrown off. As the tragic action progresses, when the tumult of the mind, first roused, has afterward subsided, the lower forms of emotion are found to have been transmuted into higher and more refined forms. The painful element in the pity and fear of reality is purged away; the emotions themselves are purged."[3]

Freud's theory.—It has remained for Sigmund Freud and his associates to elaborate, popularize and apply a conception of *katharsis* called psychoanalysis.[4] The principles of psychoanalysis as laid bare by him and others throw light upon the prayer life in general and particularly upon such devotional forms as confession, thanksgiving, adoration, and worship. A knowledge of the fundamentals of psychoanalysis is therefore essential to an appreciation of the psychology of these prayer varieties.

A careful study of hysteria convinced Freud that its cause is invariably a partially suppressed idea at variance with the social or æsthetic ideals and pretensions of the patient. The irritating idea or impression, together with the feelings and emotions which accompany it, has been called a complex by Dr. Carl G. Jung, another psychoanalyst. The idea lingers in the subconscious[5] and is repulsed whenever it tends to emerge into clear consciousness. Within the subconscious it creates a disturbance

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[3] Translated by Butcher, S. H.: *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, p. 240. The Macmillan Company.

[4] See *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. xxi, p. 181ff. Also his *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. Boni & Liveright.

[5] Freud and psychoanalysis generally use the term "unconscious" instead of subconscious.

which brings into sympathetic vibration the rest of life. It affects the mind in the same way as a foreign substance in the eye or a splinter in the flesh irritates the body. When unreleased, the unconfessed or unexpelled mental irritation induces hysteria.

Professor Freud cites a case in point treated by his precursor, teacher and coworker, Dr. Joseph Breuer. The patient, who exhibited the characteristic symptoms of hysteria, was for a period of six weeks tormented by thirst, being unable to drink water. As soon as a glass of water touched her lips she would push it away as though suffering from hydrophobia. Finally, it developed that she had once seen a little dog that she abhorred drink water out of a glass in the room of her governess. Restrained by the dictates of her code of etiquette, she did not remonstrate with the governess, but the scene and her feeling of repugnance disturbed her. Consigned to repression whenever it sought conscious recognition, the irritating element only increased its hysterical influence.

In all such cases, the personality fails to assimilate the distracting experience, trying in vain to banish it from the mind, to submerge it. It expresses itself in the symptoms of hysteria and similar diseased states. These symptoms and manifestations are but the symbols of the submerged, but active element unacceptable to the controlling ideals. It is often extremely difficult to recognize and to trace to their source the distorted forms in which the offending idea expresses itself. When the case is of long standing, the unassimilated experience may have manifested itself in such

complicated and bizarre symptoms that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to discover it.

MENTAL CONDITIONS AND MATERIALS INVOLVED

To what states and expressions of the mind may the pathological disturbances be traced? What does the process of psychoanalysis itself reveal as the sources of hysteria and similar nervous conditions? Freud's observations and experiments led him to conclude that the morbid disorder is the result of a conspiracy of three influences—haunting memories, traits having their origin in childhood, and the reproductive instinct. His contention is that it is a combination of these elements which manifests itself in characteristic hysterical symptoms. The dynamic factors as brought to light by the psychoanalyst must now be described and the contribution of each to the total result estimated.

Distracting memories.—Freud contends that hysterical persons suffer from reminiscences, that there is in all cases of hysteria an abnormal clinging to the past. In London, he reminds us, there are memorials and monuments to past scenes and occurrences. Charing Cross, a richly decorated Gothic pillar, stands before one of the greatest railway stations of the city. In the thirteenth century one of the old Plantagenet kings erected a Gothic cross wherever the casket of his beloved queen, borne to Westminster, was set down. Charing Cross marks the last of these resting places. In another part of the city there is a high pillar called the Monument, erected in memory of a great fire which broke out in the vicinity in 1666 and destroyed a large part of London. The Londoner

who should to-day stand in tears before Charing Cross or bemoan the burning of the city as he pauses before the Monument, instead of rejoicing over the queen of his own heart or over modern London, more splendid now than ever before, would be like the hysterical patient who is distracted by memory symbols out of harmony with his own standards. The person who spends his years weeping over unforgiven and unforgotten sins is spiritually defective.

The patient may be certain that there are no inconsistent elements in his personality, but within the subconscious they may become distressingly active. Dr. Freud illustrates the process of repression by comparing the offending idea with an ill-bred individual who is creating a disturbance in an audience listening to a lecture. The lecturer, plainly vexed, explains that it is impossible for him to proceed under these unfavorable conditions, whereupon several strong men in the audience lay hands upon the ruffian and eject him from the hall. He is now "repressed" and the lecture continues. In order that the ill-behaved person may not force his way back into the room several auditors establish themselves before the door to offer any necessary resistance. The auditorium represents clear consciousness, the outside the subconscious. The incompatible impulse is always trying to break down the resistance offered by the ideals, but without success, and with the result that life is distracted.

Childhood trends.—Freud traces the disrupting factor to infantile experiences, regarding child life as the permanent basis for all subsequent development. Interests and impulses, likes and dislikes,

of later acquirement are found on close inspection to be but the outgrowth of childhood tendencies. In a very vital sense the child is the father of the adult. The relation of child life to adult experience is, then, one of absolute unity and consistent continuity. We react as we do to external circumstances because of subconscious trends which have their genesis in early childhood. Before the end of that period of life, the chief personal characteristics—mental, moral, social, esthetic, religious—are determined. Nothing is evolved by the adult which was not previously involved in the child. Our inability to trace the connection between childhood experience and adult reaction is no valid argument to the contrary.

This appears to be in harmony with what we have already seen to be true of the intimate relation of early religious impulses to conversion. The religious impressions which the child assimilates may later be developed by choice. When no religious forces impinge upon the child, there can be but small hope for anything but an irreligious adult life. About fifty years before the facts of the religious consciousness were interpreted in psychological terms, Horace Bushnell wrote that multitudes of Christian conversions are the restored activity and more developed results of some predispositional states, or sanctified properties, in the subtle tempers and affinities of childhood.[6] What man has lost consciousness of still retains influence over him, and imperceptibly gives guidance and direction to his adult activities.

Sex influence.—Again, Freud asserts that the

[6] Bushnell, Horace: *Christian Nurture*, p. 247. Charles Scribner's Sons.

neurotic symptoms are traceable to the sex life. The importance he attaches to the sex life of the child has aroused strong opposition. Much of the unpopularity of this position has its root in a misunderstanding of Freud's terminology. Evidently, the sex life is to him much more comprehensive than it is to most of us. We use the term "sexual" in a far more restricted sense. In justice to him, it should be remarked that he interprets this conception very liberally and generously. To him it is synonymous with love and all its eradiations, such as parental regard, and shame and disgust, with the life-force or vital impulse mentioned by some writers. Furthermore, he finds, as do others, that the sex life of the child is far more complex and comprehensive than is generally supposed. The thumb-sucking, nail-picking, the gentle feeling of regard for a child of the opposite sex, and curiosity with reference to the reproduction of human life, the preference of the little son for the mother and of the daughter for the father are all by him called sexual. According to Freud the cause of hysteria, as disclosed by psychoanalysis, is always of a "sexual" nature and at variance with the moral requirements of the patient.[7]

As an example Freud cites the following case:

[7] Jung, who heads the Zurich school in opposition to the Vienna school under the leadership of Freud, in his theory of psychoanalysis includes the sex basis of Freud but transcends it, postulating a primal urge in man comparable to the energy of physics. Jung regards the various manifestations of sex as important but not as the exclusive channels through which the energy of life is discharged. He sees in childhood expressions the forerunners of later developed sexuality, and not perversions of sexuality, as does Freud. In such an instance as the little son's preference for his mother Jung sees nothing sexual but a distorted and symbolical and subjective image created by the imagination. Unlike Freud, Jung does not discover the root of a pathological disturbance in the infantile past, in the sexuality of the child, but in a conflict in the present, in an immediate and momentarily existing obstacle in the path of duty to be overcome. Consult Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*, translated by Beatrice M. Hinkle. Moffat, Yard & Co.

"It is that of a young girl, who was deeply attached to her father, who died a short time before, and in whose care she had shared. . . . When her older sister married, the girl grew to feel a peculiar sympathy for her new brother-in-law, which easily passed with her for family tenderness. The sister soon fell ill and died, while the patient and her mother were away. The absent ones were hastily recalled, without being told fully of the painful situation. As the girl stood by the bedside of her dead sister, for one short moment there surged up in her mind an idea, which might be framed in these words: 'Now he is free to marry me.' We may be sure that this idea, which betrayed to her consciousness her intense love for her brother-in-law, of which she had not been conscious, was the next moment consigned to repression by her revolted feelings. The girl fell ill with severe hysterical symptoms, and, when I came to treat the case, it appeared that she had entirely forgotten that scene at her sister's bedside and the unnatural egoistic desire which had arisen in her. She remembered it during the treatment, reproduced the pathogenic moment with every sign of intense emotional excitement, and was cured by this treatment."[8]

THE METHOD OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Discovering the complex.—How can the complex which is the root of the malady be detected? When it is brought to light what shall be done to relieve the sufferer? It is not sufficient to know that the nervous and painful memory is associated with childhood and sexuality. The specific situation which

[8] *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. xxi, pp. 193, 194.

is disrupting the self must be ferreted out and given proper treatment. A technic for the discovery and disposition of the complex has been devised and gradually refined.

To converse freely about the root of the disturbance, to give expression to the original emotional excitement, to reinstate and to live over, as it were, the details of a distressing scene, brings relief from hysteria. The physician who applies the principles of psychoanalysis encourages the patient to divulge whatever is lurking in the mind, be it ever so trivial or embarrassing. A seemingly irrelevant statement or phrase may betray the wish or idea which the patient has only partially repressed. A sensitivity to certain topics of conversation, little tricks of behavior, slips of the tongue, may reveal the repressed complex. The aim of this treatment is to discover to the patient the mental process underlying the hysterical symptoms that he may squarely face the issue and dispose of it according to the dictates of conscience.

Dr. Freud's theory has led to dream analysis as a method of diagnosing certain mental derangements. Since they are frequently the *motifs* of dreams, the offending ideas are often discoverable by the physician who gains a knowledge of the dreams of the patient. A young business man came to Dr. A. A. Brill, of New York, to be cured of an obsession in the form of an abnormal interest in socialism. "There isn't half an hour in the day when I am not thinking about the accursed thing," he said. "I wake up mornings asking myself the question, 'Isn't socialism a correct theory?' Then I am compelled to get hold of all the books and

pamphlets I can find, and read what is said for and against it." The fixed idea persisted despite the fact that the patient was, if anything, opposed to socialism. The physician adopted the method of dream analysis to lay bare the cause of the disorder. One day Dr. Brill and the patient were discussing a dream of the latter, which involved an affair at which Bernard Shaw and a man with a peculiar wig were guests. The dreamer recalled that on the previous day he had read a book to which the famous author of his dreams had written an introduction. The patient told the physician that the wig of the other guest reminded him of the hair of his wife. Urged to continue the unburdening of his mind, the patient confessed that he had been jealous of his wife. Sensing a clue, Dr. Brill asked him to define socialism. "Socialism means collective ownership," was the reply. The truth had suddenly been brought to light. The malady was due to subconscious jealousy. Although the patient had tried to banish all doubt and jealousy, the half-controlled fear that there might be a "collective ownership" of his wife's affections haunted him subconsciously and expressed itself in the abnormal interest in socialism and wove itself into the fabric of his dreams. In possession of this knowledge the physician soon freed the patient of his obsession.[9]

If the desired information is not given in the normal state, the physician may resort to hypnotism. It is well known that the power of recollection may be intensified through hypnotism so that what one is unable to recall in the normal

[9] Brill, A. A.: *Psychoanalysis*, p. 104ff. W. B. Saunders.

state may be recovered in the trance. Sometimes the physician employs what is known as the "word-association" method. An instrument is used by means of which he measures in hundredths of a second the time of the response of the patient to certain words. In addition to the time element the nature of the response itself is significant. By this method, words related to the source of hysteria are discovered. The patient is then pressed to confess all ideas and experiences associated with the significant words.

Disposing of the complex.—It is the contention of Freud that an impulse freed from repression can in no wise prove subversive to the moral life. In fact, when a disturbing impulse or memory is subconscious, and therefore not amenable to control, it exerts a far more pernicious influence than when it is conscious. When the subconscious disturbance is released with an intense emotional accompaniment, its power may be consumed at once in the fires of an outraged conscience. In other cases it may be neither wholly condemned nor entirely sanctioned, but refined and regulated and expressed in a higher form of discharge. In still other cases the freed impulse may not clash with the moral sentiments, and its legitimacy may therefore be frankly conceded. The confession of the young girl cured by Dr. Freud purged the self of the morbid complex at once. It is conceivable that she might have been led to express her love for her brother-in-law in the kindly deeds of social service. Doubtless, there are many cases which reveal to the self perfectly proper objects of affection or courses of action.

PRAYER IN THE LIGHT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

While all prayer is in a sense a religious urge which it would be unwise to suppress, psychoanalysis as a means of relief is much more pronounced in some forms of prayer than in others. Haunted by a sense of guilt and regret, the person may seek and find relief in the prayer of confession. Convinced that God will lend a sympathetic ear, he freely pours forth what he would withhold from his most intimate human friend. The confession is followed by a sense of exaltation and unity with his Maker. Likewise, the one who obeys the impulse to thank, adore, or worship God experiences a sense of relief and harmony with his deepest conception of Reality. Evidently, these prayers constitute a form of self-expression with gratifying results.

The prayer of confession.—It may be well to quote one or two prayers of confession and to point out the estimation in which they are held by the religious consciousness before we proceed to a psychological description. The benefits of this type of prayer are set forth with characteristic vividness by Brother Lawrence in the following passage: "I consider myself as the most wretched of men, full of sores and corruption, and who has committed all sorts of crimes against the King. Touched with a sensible regret, I confess to him all my wickedness. I ask his forgiveness, I abandon myself in his hands that he may do what he pleases with me. The King, full of mercy and goodness, very far from chastising me, embraces me with love, makes me eat at his table, serves me with his

own hands, gives me the key of his treasures; he converses and delights himself with me incessantly, in a thousand and a thousand ways, and treats me in all respects as his favorite."[10]

Pulpit prayer, as a rule, gives some utterance to the shortcomings of humanity, and the desire for pardon and deliverance from all evil. Typical is the following extract from a prayer of confession made by Henry Ward Beecher in his pulpit: "O look with compassion upon our poor and despoiled estate. We admit our sin. We admit that in many things we offend entirely; that we transgress against our experience even; against all knowledge; yea, against all purpose. We admit our transgression, and our sin is ever before us; but, Lord, beside that what infirmities come upon us often as the very sea comes! How are we thrown into despondency! The things that we would we do not; and the things that we would not we do. Lord, have compassion upon us. Thou art a High Priest, and thou art ordained as a High Priest, because thou canst have compassion upon the ignorant, and upon those that are out of the way. Have compassion upon us, not to permit us to go on in things known to be wrong with impunity."[11]

The divided self.—An unconfessed and unforgiven moral lapse, secret temptation, haunting questionable desires, create a breach in the religious life which only confession can heal. The mental anguish which is endured has its source in a disruptive mental state, in reminiscences which infect the mind.

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[10] Brother Lawrence: *The Practice of the Presence of God*, p. 25. American Baptist Publishing Society.

[11] Cited in Handford, T. W.: *Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 260. Belford, Clark & Co.

It has its roots in a mental unrest; partially repressed material is seeking the conscious recognition which is denied it. The haunting element is contrary to the moral standard of the sufferer; hence, the personality is threatened with a split, a rupture. To persist in repulsing the disturbing factor is only to increase its power to distract and divide the self. Doubtless, the symptoms of many cases of hysteria and kindred mental disorders have their genesis in experiences connected with the religious life. The unconfessed element may manifest itself in distorted forms which to the superficial observer seem to be at the farthest remove from the person's religious sentiments.

The reinstatement of the distraction.—Convinced that God is all compassion, the person may finally unburden himself in the prayer of confession, withholding nothing that oppresses him. One confession opens the way for another until the distraction has been divulged. The confession experience may be accompanied by violent, but appropriate, emotional states. The person may rehearse vividly and with intense excitement the details of the experience that has become the point of tension within him. With all their original intensity and reality the disquieting scenes may be reenacted.

Disposition of the religious complex.—When the prayer of confession makes the discordant note conscious, conscience sits in judgment upon the offender, condemning, exonerating, or recommending a process of refinement and discipline. The impulse which is allowed to represent itself above the threshold of consciousness may stand convicted before the tribunal of conscience and be

sentenced to die, or be declared altogether innocent and be permitted to run at large, or be neither wholly acquitted nor condemned, but restrained and modified for higher purposes. If the fault confessed is not deeply embedded, has not become habitual, and the moral constitution is vigorous enough, it may perish at once in the intense feeling of moral repugnance which it arouses. In many instances the petitional prayer is relied upon to eradicate the tendencies which the confession has revealed. By the same means lower trends are disciplined and transmuted into higher forms of self-expression. Thus devotional prayer may be the springs of petition. When the confessed experience is a mere memory and is no longer actually indulged in, the mental reinstatement coupled with intense emotional excitement is of itself sufficient to purge the self and restore its equilibrium.

Confession is good for the soul, because it grants conscious recognition to elements that distress the religious self. The impulse released is disposed of according to the sense of fitness which characterizes the religious sentiment. Conscience censors conduct, and unless it is drugged into insensibility clamors when its demands are not satisfied. The person may have no conscious knowledge of any irregular proceedings in his life, but conscience may have given them subconscious registration and they may obtrude themselves as distractions. As already stated, in some cases the confession itself rids the personality of the baneful influence; in others, petitional forms of the prayer relation must be brought to bear upon the clashing impulse to complete the work of elimination or transformation.

Religious confession safeguards life; it is a preventive as well as a remedial measure. If made as soon as impulses contrary to the ideals are seriously entertained, or unhappy experiences occur, it keeps life from becoming morbid and diseased and prevents hysterical complications. By draining off elements incompatible with the moral standards, confession keeps the self unified and wholesome.

The consciousness of divine forgiveness.—The process of psychoanalysis in confession has been most wonderfully described by the ancient psalmist who wrote: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."[12] Confession of sin is normally followed by the consciousness of forgiveness by and union with God. Unless the wrong is admitted and confessed there can be no forgiveness and no moral cleansing. As long as the person clings to evil and refuses to repudiate his dark ways, he is both self-condemned and alienated from God. Only admission of personal guilt and amendment can restore the severed relation between the self and its God.

The prayer of praise.—The psychology of the prayer of praise is closely akin to that of confession. Let a writer of devotional literature describe this type of prayer: "We may think of praise in three parts—Adoration, Thanksgiving, Worship. Thus,

[12] Psalm 32: 3–5.

we adore God for what he is; we thank him for what he does; we worship him as our Overlord."[13] As a rule the three parts of praise are closely connected in prayer; like three-colored threads in a pattern they weave themselves into the texture of the devotional life. Petition, confession, thanksgiving, adoration, and worship intermingle.

Worship and adoration.—In the following quotation from a public prayer from the lips of the gifted Henry Ward Beecher, adoration and worship are fused: "With those that rejoice round about thee, O dearly beloved of men and angels, our Father, we this morning rejoice likewise, according to the measure of our light, and according to the measure in which thou hast wrought in us to will and to do of thy good pleasure. In thy joyfulness, which is as the light going over all the heaven and throughout creation, everything has light and joy. What thou art, that thou canst bring joy out of sorrow, we cannot conceive. Thou that dost sanctify suffering in thyself, and bear the burden of the universe, and yet art most blest and joyful of all—how shall we rise to the conception of such an One? Thy virtues take thee away out of the reach of our thought; for we are selfish; we are low-minded and earthly; we grope among things, and can scarcely rise to the higher range even of our own souls; but thou art a spirit, unconfined, universal, rejoicing in what men detest; we seeking to rid ourselves of burdens, and thou multiplying them perpetually; we occupied with the things that concern ourselves, and thou with the things that concern all other creatures

[13] Holmes, E. E.: *Prayer and Action*, p. 84. Longmans, Green & Co.

but thyself; we perpetually asking to be served, and thou eternally serving."[14]

The contemplation of the attributes of God, his power and majesty, induces in us a desire to adore and worship him. Awe and reverence arouse the attitude of worship and are themselves intensified by the devotional mood. Worship is the response of the self to the consciousness of the presence of God. Prayer is the natural outlet for the consciousness of the sovereignty and glory of God. The public worship of God should create an atmosphere in which it is easy to pray. The architectural appeal, the subtle influence of music, the suggestive ritual all tend to reduce the minds of the congregation to the mood of worship and its expression in devotional prayer. Denied its normal mode of discharge, the urge to worship and adore God effects at least a temporary internal dislocation.

Thanksgiving.—The prayer of thanksgiving is the expression of a grateful heart. It is a favorite form of devotion. Saint Paul says, "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."[15] In *Minna von Barnhelm*, Lessing says, "A single grateful thought toward heaven is the most perfect prayer." "The mighty men of prayer in the Bible, and the mighty men of prayer throughout the ages of the church's history have been men who were much given to thanksgiving and praise. David was a mighty man of prayer, and how his Psalms abound with thanksgiving and praise. The apostles were mighty men of prayer; of them we read that 'they were continually in the temple,

[14] Handford, T. W.: *Henry Ward Beecher*, p. 264. Belford, Clark & Co.
[15] Philippians 4: 6.

praising and blessing God.' Paul was a mighty man of prayer, and how often in his epistles he bursts out in definite thanksgiving to God for definite blessings and definite answers to prayers. Jesus is our model in prayer as in everything else. We find in the study of his life that his manner of returning thanks at the simplest meal was so noticeable that two of his disciples recognized him by this after his resurrection."[16]

The following is a spontaneous outburst of gratitude in prayer form: "Gracious Lord, I thank thee for all softening influences in our land. I thank thee for the presence of little children. I thank thee for winsome old age. I thank thee for all gracious men. I thank thee for strong men who impress by their gentleness."[17] When thanks are returned for blessings enjoyed, the faith state is intensified and a holy boldness and full assurance support the prayer life. When the person meditates upon and acknowledges the benevolence of God, he feels encouraged to make petitions and intercessions. Prayer springs spontaneously from the heart overflowing with gratitude toward the universe.

It is a matter of inestimable value to say grace and give thanks at the table for the provided food. The constantly recurring acknowledgment of the bounty of God tempers the sensuous process of eating and makes it a sacrament. The omission of the expression of homage and gratitude is insufferable to those with whom the table prayer has become an habitual religious propriety. Doubtless, the custom develops the rare grace of equanimity

[16] Torrey, R. A.: *How to Pray*, p. 76. Fleming H. Revell Company.
[17] Jowett, J. H.: *Yet Another Day*, Twentieth Day of July. Fleming H. Revell Company.

and thankfulness. The crust of poverty is the sweeter for the religious flavor imparted by gratitude. The following specimen is taken from a volume of table prayers: "O Saviour, as we come again to thy table and the food thou hast so lovingly provided, we pray for those less fortunate, those whom ailment and misfortune have visited, and those in sin. Provide, O merciful Saviour, for them as thou hast provided for us. Teach us that we should show unto our fellow men mercy and justice and never let pass by an opportunity when we may do good to them and thus serve thee."[18]

Praise and psychoanalysis.—What occurs in a more advanced and complicated form in the prayer of confession doubtless takes place in the prayer of praise. The desire to adore, worship and thank God may be a disquieting influence when partially repressed. When the impulse is discharged, the equilibrium of the mind is restored. The mere freeing of the impulse through prayer alone may, it should be added, not satisfy those whose religion is socialized. Such persons have no peace until the prayer of praise has expressed itself manward. This type of prayer should not be regarded as a mere liberator of devotional promptings. Its effects upon a socialized self from which it springs are significant for the religious life. It intensifies the conviction that the character of God is morally perfect, that his works are wonderful, and that his purpose for the race is benevolent. It gives life a religious purpose and meaning. The devotional mind tends to reflect in conduct the sentiments released in the form of adoration and worship.

[18] Nyce, A. W., and Bunyea, H.: *Grace Before Meals.* John C. Winston Company.

How confession and praise differ.—While the process of psychoanalysis is discernible in both the prayer of confession and of praise, there is a difference between these forms of devotion which should not escape attention. Confession concerns itself with impulses and acts which are reprehensible. The prayer of confession liberates from repression a questionable desire or deed for final disposition by conscience. The material and purpose of the prayers of praise are different. Praise liberates an impulse fully sanctioned and approved by conscience. The inner movement released is not an unholy thing and as such to be purged out of the self, but an ennobling urge which can accomplish its mission only when set free. Afforded expression, praise turns upon itself and enriches the fountain from which it flows.

Psychoanalysis is a means to an end. The religious consciousness employs it for the purpose of achieving a union of joy and power with God. When man is conscious of his shortcomings and confesses them, God is merciful and forgives. Broken relations between man and God are restored, and the peace that passeth understanding floods the soul. When the occasion for praise arouses an appropriate response, not only is alienation from God averted but the consciousness of his sanction and worth is intensified. Far from dethroning God, the prayer involving the psychoanalytic procedure enthrones him afresh in the hearts of men and makes him the central creative enthusiasm. This method mediates God to the praying soul. It is one of God's ways of making dynamic contact with man.

CHAPTER X

OTHER DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS

We have seen that the prayers of confession and praise give expression to unassimilated unethical experiences as well as to wholesome promptings of the soul life. Questionable impulses are afforded an outlet and devotional cravings are released in the form of the devotional prayer already considered. We turn now to a group of devotional prayers, the psychological trait of which seems to be a reorganization of the self in terms of its deepest moral and religious insight. This unifying process has been pointed out and experimentally used by Dr. George D. Bivin and by him called psychosynthesis.

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Psychosynthesis and psychoanalysis are contrasting processes. Psychoanalysis is a thoroughgoing dissection of a distressing and repulsed situation, a separation of a disquieting whole into its component parts, the liberation of a disturbance. The emotional escape of the haunting memory or distasteful desire averts a split in the personality. Peace and poise are recovered by ridding the self of an unwelcome intrusion. Psychosynthesis, on the other hand, entails the adoption of an idea more or less opposed but consistent with the religious idealism of the person. It brings into life a fresh element which creates a higher unity. By

it a new union of spiritual powers is attained. It is assimilative, a program is brought from the circumference of the self into its very center. It strikes harmony between the personality and duty, misfortune, or God. By the process of psychosynthesis the new insight becomes the central and regnant factor of the self, grouping all else about itself in subordinate relations. Psychoanalysis is expulsive, psychosynthesis receptive.

Illustrations of the synthetic process.—The human understanding combines related data into a unified system. The process of putting together parts or elements so as to compose a complex whole is clearly recognizable in various departments of thought and science. The act of learning as described by educators exhibits the synthetic tendency of the mind. When new lesson material is presented to the pupil, it is comprehended and assimilated in terms of previous knowledge and experience. The present is synthetized with the past and thus acquires meaning and value; the union of the new and old constitutes a fresh whole. At first the new is understood by the young child as something which he already knows about, but later he assigns it an existence and a meaning of its own. One small boy called snow, sugar; an electric meter, a clock; a circus rider in uniform, a king; the core of a pear, a crust; dust particles seen in a ray of light, flies; but in the course of time and with the expansion of life he began properly to classify and rate these novelties. The mind appears to resist the intrusion of fresh ideas, for the reception of the new makes a rearrangement of the old furnishings imperative.

In the natural sciences synthesis denotes the

formation of a compound by a combination of its elements. Physics makes liberal use of the term and variously applies its principle. White is produced by the physicist by synthetizing its constituent colors. Physics teaches that a complex musical sound is a compound of component simple tones. The violin string, for example, has a fine proportion of partial tones, the lowest audible of which is called the fundamental tone, and the others overtones. The whole may be analyzed into the partial tones which the mind may be able to abstract. It is, however, the habitual readiness of the mind to grasp and appreciate the sound as a whole. The mind synthetizes the partial tones. The full compound tone, heard as a unit, affords us more æsthetic gratification than does a separation of it into its constituents.

The synthetic activity in religion.—In an analogous manner the religious consciousness makes a continuous effort to keep life harmonious through the adoption and practice of recognized obligations. The spiritual sensibilities demand that the self be dominated by a progressive comprehension of things which matter most. When the self falls short of what it feels it should be, conscience creates a disturbance which endures until the level of conduct has been raised. The spiritual nature of man manifests a pronounced synthetic activity by which a new combination of moral forces is achieved. At first the imposing religious obligation is resisted and repulsed but finally it is accepted and placed in control of the self. Once in the seat of power the fresh insight brings into harmony with itself all other interests. The tension between a duty

and the self, for instance, is not eliminated by renouncing the duty but by accepting its challenge and by adjusting all other things to the discharge of it. Although once an external pressure, duty, when owned, becomes an internal compulsion. A situation, once contested but at last made central and supreme, reorganizes the self, synthetizes the elements of life. The psychosynthetic prayer grips and divides the self, purges and sifts its elements, and in accordance with a new sense of obligation recombines them.

PSYCHOSYNTHETIC PRAYERS

Miss Strong in her book, *The Psychology of Prayer*, would interpret all prayer forms, petitional as well as devotional, as a social relation between a consciously inferior self and an ideal, superior self, having for their purpose the construction of a more victorious, a more competent, a more enduring personality. This conception appears to be akin to that of psychosynthesis. Interpreted broadly and liberally, this unifying activity underlies every type of prayer relation. In all prayer, petitional as well as devotional, there is a subtle analytic and synthetic process by means of which the person hopes to ease inner tension, release spiritual unrest, and construct a more victorious self.

This generous interpretation seems to touch the ends rather than the processes of petitional and of some devotional prayers. It seems best to describe prayer in terms of the process itself which furthers an adjustment to the spiritual universe. Since petitional prayer tends to realize an ideal self through religious suggestion, it seems well to regard the

process of suggestion as the chief psychological aspect. Since the prayers of confession and praise save the self from a rupture by discharging impulses to praise or by reinstating distressing experiences, it would appear best to interpret them psychologically as forms of a religious *katharsis*. The type of devotional prayer to the psychological exposition of which this chapter is devoted, doubtless reveals to a greater extent than any other a fusion of life in terms of a higher purpose through the prayerful attitude itself. The specialized forms of this type are the prayers of aspiration, consecration, submission, and communion.

The prayer of aspiration.—Many persons live in an atmosphere of sacred desire and holy ambition. In devotional mood they constantly ejaculate their aspirations to be righteous, benevolent, and in harmony with the purpose of God. This prayer attitude tends to fix the program of purpose and action, to steady the vagrant impulses, to summon the spiritual powers. It gives life a constant impetus and momentum toward unity and self-consistency. Through constant and meaningful repetition of sacred ambition one keeps before the self the vision of the ideal.

Unitary effort.—Many confess that to them prayer consists in a summoning of scattering moral forces into a synthesis of personal powers for greater efficiency. When there is a more effective formation of the moral attributes a realization of the ideals occurs with a consequent growth of still higher ideals. The coalition of higher activities and qualities of mind and character presents a solid front to the elements which attack the moral integ-

rity of the self. One who is predisposed to melancholy may heroically and prayerfully cultivate the cheerful outlook, the contagious smile, and the creative act; or one who is quick-tempered and hypersensitive may practice long-suffering and meekness. A successful high-school teacher says that to her prayer is an urgent appeal to her own power of self-control when there is occasion for impatience and annoyance. The aroused will joins together in a unitary impression ideal and conduct.

Illustrations.—Biographical literature is replete with an extensive variety of aspirational prayers. Socrates at the conclusion of his dialogue with Phædrus under the palm tree prays, "Beloved Pan and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and the inward man be at one."[1]

Interesting aspirational prayers have been discovered among the Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions. Neriglissar, king of Babylon from 559 to 556 B. C., left behind an oft-repeated and ungranted prayer for a long reign: "O Marduk, great lord, lord of the gods, glorious light of the gods, I pray thee; may I, according to thy exalted, unchangeable command, enjoy the glory of the house which I have built, may I attain unto old age in it."[2] Nabonidus, a later king of Babylon, was a man of unusual piety. His energies were absorbed by the building and restoration of temples, by supervising the work of scholars engaged in researches concerning the remote past, and by prayers and devotion to the gods. In the following prayer

[1] *Phædrus*, Jowett's translation, p. 279. Clarendon Press.
[2] *Cambridge Cylinder*, col. II, lines 31–34.

of his, special blessings are invoked upon his son: "From sin against thy exalted godhead guard me, and grant me, as a gift, life for many days, and in the heart of Belshazzar, my first-born son, the offspring of my body, establish reverence for thy great godhead. May he not incline to sin, but enjoy the fullness of life."[3]

Beautiful for sentiment and expression are the prayers of the Rev. J. H. Jowett, as published in a little volume entitled *Yet Another Day*. It will suffice to quote two or three.

"Father, enlarge my sympathies; give me a roomier heart. May my life be like a great hospitable tree, and may many weary wanderers find in me a rest!"

"My Father, I would have the mind of Christ. Take away all my petty and self-centered thoughts, and give me the large and sympathetic thoughts of Christ. Give me a roomy heart in which my brethren may find hospitality."

"Holy Spirit, quicken the secret springs of my life. May I abound in spiritual willingness! May I rise daily into newness of life! Take all reluctance out of my discipleship. May thy law be my delight!"

The prayer of consecration.—The sensitive personality cannot rest until it has abandoned itself to what it conceives to be its life purpose. Many a conflict between the self and its richer outlook, its paramount duty, its acknowledged mission, is resolved in prayer. A natural desire to cling to the past, a tendency to drift with the current,

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[3] Cited in Rogers, R. W.: *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, vol. ii, p. 362. The Methodist Book Concern.

ethical and religious inertia, all yield to the prayer of consecration, fusing the elements of the personality in a higher combination. It closes, as it were, the old channels of discharge by opening new ones. A vision of what one should be or do arouses internal dissatisfaction; often a struggle follows in which idealism triumphs. In the making of a decision for the right, poise is recovered.

The psychosynthetic process in the baptism of Jesus.— The life of Christ discloses instances of this type of devotion. We may be sure that as a youth he reacted against the current conceptions of religion, against a dead orthodoxy and hollow formalism. He became conscious that religion is spiritual and moral, and not the perfunctory performance of ceremony and obedience to a code of laws devoid of moral content. There came to him as he meditated in the night watches the overpowering conviction that it was his real mission to become a public teacher, servant, and Saviour of men. He doubtless heard of the message of John and felt himself in accord with the substance of it. We can understand why he approached the great evangelist and requested to be baptized by him in token of his own submission to the principles of righteousness so fearlessly proclaimed.

We read that a sacred and dramatic experience was his when he was being baptized, that the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form as a dove, and that a voice proclaimed him the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. Luke, who has flashes of penetration into some of the most intense experiences of Christ, records the significant fact that these unique

manifestations came to him while he was praying.[4] In baptism Christ unquestionably committed himself definitely and unreservedly to the glorious task of preaching and teaching the cardinal principles of the kingdom of God. In the act of prayer he consolidated his convictions. The attitude was accompanied by a vivid sense of the divine sanction and a release of religious energy for his mission. In the act of consecration the consciousness of Sonship was crystallized.

The subordination of the physical to the spiritual by Jesus.—The consecration in the Jordan was not his last and only self-dedication. The record of his experiences the first Sabbath spent in Capernaum after his dedication to the public ministry is evidence to the contrary. In the morning, in the synagogue he healed a demoniac, probably a moral degenerate. The healing marked a crisis in the life of Christ, for it was doubtless the first case of disease cured by him. Through this his powers as a healer of men's physical defects were revealed. In the afternoon of the same day he touched the hand of Peter's mother-in-law, and the fever left her and she arose and served her Benefactor and his friends. Not many hours elapsed before the news had spread throughout the city that a wonder-worker was within its gates, and at sundown a vast company of the sick appealed to him. Although he was exhausted by the labors of the day, no sleep visited him that night. A long time before daybreak he threaded his way through the crooked streets and "departed into a desert place and there prayed."

[4] Luke 3: 21.

He was experiencing the embarrassment of a success that threatened his real mission. The occurrences of the day made it clear to him that his work as a healer might overshadow his mission as a teacher. It was a matter of relativity, of deciding which to subordinate, that led him into the solitary place to meditate and pray. Should he figure as a physician to the body rather than as a physician to the soul? That he consecrated himself anew to his kingdom mission and decided to make the healing of the body subsidiary is clearly demonstrated by the fact that he left the city at once, and returned only after his fame as a healer had had time to abate. He said to his disciples, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth."[5]

Jesus and self-consistency through prayer.—Yet another crisis came into the life of Christ which was successfully met in the prayer of consecration. The time came when the opposition against him sought his life. While in Galilee he was convinced that his life was in danger if he remained there or journeyed to Jerusalem. The Herodians of Galilee, as political plotters, considered his influence over the masses inimical to their own dark purposes. To remain longer in that territory was to court death at the hands of unscrupulous politicians. The gravity of the situation was augmented by the fact that Jerusalem offered no safe refuge. To leave Galilee and go to Jerusalem was to escape the animosity of the Herodians only to fall into the eager clutches of the Pharisees and priests. One other course lay open—

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[5] Mark 1: 38.

to leave Palestine altogether, to teach and spend the rest of his life in a foreign land.

Christ left Galilee, retiring to the region of Tyre and Sidon, not because he feared the hate-filled religious leaders or the agents of Herod but for the purpose of coming to a decision as to the course he should pursue. In a condition of disturbed mental equilibrium he wandered to and fro. Finally, he ascended a hill in the company of three intimate disciples. Luke, with characteristic psychological insight, furnishes a hint which precipitates a reasonable interpretation of the ensuing occurrence, called the Transfiguration. He says, "And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering."[6]

Doubtless in the act of prayer Christ caught up into their accustomed higher unity the elements of his personality. He consecrated himself anew to the only course consistent with his life purpose. Only by yielding to his sense of religious obligation and privilege could a fracture of the self be avoided. The decision made, all tension was released and his face glowed with inner light and peace. He came out of the experience to proceed by deliberate, yet unwavering, stages to Jerusalem, and there, during the Passover, he made his last appeal and laid down his life for his cause.

The prayer of submission.—It is no small matter to become reconciled to the inevitable. Tribulations and disasters will come, and we cannot escape some attitude toward them. By nature we shrink from the abyss that threatens to engulf us; we do our utmost to avoid impending doom. The cosmic processes

[6] Luke 9: 29.

of pain and death are relentless and impartial. Now, religion, in its best form, teaches a wise submission to the unavoidable, a firm trust in the ultimate triumph of justice, and an unwavering faith in the persistence of the moral element of the world. It sees in the calamities and misfortunes of men an overruling Providence, with a disciplinary and educational and, in some cases, a redemptive purpose in view. It traces the rainbow in the rain.

The prayers of resignation as limitless.—The great prayer of Christ, wrung from his lips when he faced arrest and ignominious and immediate death, "Thy will be done," has taught thousands to be reconciled to fate or the painful consequence of iron duty. It has probably done more to bring submission to the distressed than any other utterance from Christ. When the petitional prayer, in the nature of things, cannot be answered, the prayer of submission may still be made with telling effect.

Petitional prayer is limited, the prayer of submission is limitless. There is no disaster over which it cannot triumph. Submission calms an excited mind, effects reconciliation to, and even cheerful acceptance of, the catastrophe, and preserves the integrity of the personality. It keeps life free from the paralysis of pessimism. The disposition wrought by submission averts the peril and blight of a disrupted, despairing and fractured mind. A young clergyman recently remarked that if his child were sick unto death, he would still pray, not to save the infant's life, but to find comfort and resignation in the hour of trial. The submissive soul assimilates, to the conservation of its faith and peace, a naturally grim event. The calamity

is incorporated into life's program, spiritualized and interpreted as a form of discipline.

The martyr spirit.—The spirit of resignation is often glorified in martyrdom. A study in the psychology of the martyr-mind would doubtless bring to light a disposition that glories in making a sacrifice for the sake of principle. While the suffering of martyrs who have been tortured to death in times past excite our commiseration, we may rest assured that many a genuine martyr would have been secretly and deeply disappointed if he had not been condemned to seal his convictions with his life. Far more than life itself, according to the martyr-constitution, is the privilege of suffering for one's ideals.

Christian submission is not the bending of the back of a slave to the lash of a taskmaster, but the breaking of the chains of misfortune. It is not a ladder lying upon the ground, but a ladder set up by which to climb. Beaten with rods, stoned, destitute, hungry, cold, betrayed by his own countrymen, and forsaken by his friends, Paul regards his manifold trials and tribulations endured for the sake of the gospel as signal honors and marks of distinction. Submission to misfortune was not mere pious resignation, it was the glorification of tribulation and the construction of a victorious self. The spirit of submission was active rather than passive.

Dramatic responses.—Occasionally the prayer of submission, like other types of devotional prayer, is accompanied by voices and visions which bring comfort and consolation. It has been repeatedly stated in these pages that mental structure and

character determine the forms of religious experience. Where favorable temperamental conditions obtain, this type of prayer relation may induce the outward projection of the ideas associated with submission. A friend relates that his young child was so ill that he was pronounced incurable by the attending physicians. In deep distress, the father prayed for grace to yield to the inevitable. One can imagine the depression and anguish of the parent. One morning while shoveling coal into the furnace in the basement of the house, he heard a voice saying, "Fear not," which comforted him immeasurably. The attitude of resignation had become audible.

The prayer of communion.—Many souls cannot rest until they have unified life through man's highest and most sacred privilege—communion with God. They are torn asunder whenever convinced that something has disturbed their fellowship with the Most High. Psychology is not called upon to answer the question as to the ultimate nature of the experience known as the presence of God. This task belongs to philosophy. Nevertheless, psychology may describe the experience as a process.[7]

The social nature of man and fellowship with God.—The deeply rooted social nature of man may account for the burning desire which we have to hold communion with God. The impulse is

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[7] For a well-poised discussion of mysticism in both its milder and more extreme forms see Pratt, J. B.: *The Religious Consciousness*, Chapters XVI–XX. The Macmillan Company.

For an illuminating historical survey of mysticism see Jones, Rufus M.: *Studies in Mystical Religion.* The Macmillan Company.

For a popular treatise of present-day types of mystical experiences see Buckham, J. W.: *Mysticism and Modern Life.* The Abingdon Press.

akin to man's instinct to fellowship with man. If man may have fellowship with man, why not with God as friend with friend? Christianity preaches that God is a Father vitally interested in the welfare of each individual, and that all men are brothers. The logical inference is that a son may commune with his father as well as with his brothers. The Christian religion, furthermore, teaches that when all others forsake us, God remains our constant Friend; that when we stand friendless here below, we have a Friend eternal in the heavens. This form of religion is social, and as such leans toward conscious relationship with God.

Ethical communion with God.—Among many men of the predominantly active and intellectual type contact with God is believed to be made when the best of which they are capable is expressed in moral living. They affirm that they touch the Highest when thought and purpose are in harmony with the moral and social requirements of the religious spirit of the times. They regard moral sensitivity and the consciousness of duty as the presence and will of God. They tell us that God is not to be comprehended in a complex of emotions but to be apprehended in moral action.

While the mystical temperament regards the justice and mercy required by the Lord as the normal outcome of union and communion with God, others insist that the practice of these fundamental virtues constitutes the humble walk with Jehovah. They maintain that it is not emotional rapture or prophetic ecstasy but moral uprightness that effects union with God. The closeness of our walk with him varies directly with our moral atti-

tudes. Father and son may live under the same roof, eat at the same table and work side by side, and incompatibility may keep them leagues apart. He who holds ethical communion with God calls attention to the fact that, according to the Beatitudes, it is necessary to be pure in heart before we can see God and to be peacemakers before we can be called the children of God. Not in dazzling vision or rare moment of exaltation but in the application of his principles to ourselves and social conditions do we see Christ. In the words of the recently discovered saying of Jesus, "Raise the stone, and thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and there am I."

Metaphysical communion with God.—But the warmer type craves a mystical fellowship with God, not only as a source of moral inspiration, but for the sake of communion itself. The man of mystical disposition achieves the consciousness of God within him through the prayer of communion, through meditation and a responsive attitude to divine promptings. When he is still, he knows that God is a reality. Consciousness is unified by the central controlling idea of God, the prevailing emotional tone being that of adoration, wonder, admiration, awe, reverence. Statements like the following, selected from the replies to questions concerning communion with God, reveal the intimacy and warmth of the experience: "I have attained a distinct feeling of the presence of God verging on the mystical sense." "Sometimes he has seemed inexpressively near—all-enveloping, etc." "Yes, some brooding spirit out of which my soul has sprung, and in the heart of which it must be held

if my soul is satisfied." Brother Lawrence writes: "I cannot imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of the presence of God. For my part, I keep myself retired with him in the fund or center of my soul as much as I can; and while I am so with him I fear nothing, but the least turning from him is insupportable. . . . Let us live and die with God. Suffering will be sweet and pleasant to us while we are with him; and the greatest pleasures will be, without him, a cruel punishment to us."[8]

Attention in prayers of fellowship.—The prayer of communion exhibits not only the process of psychosynthesis, but also the trait of attention so prominent in petitional prayer. The following accounts given by trustworthy persons are characteristic: "I make the effort to feel the presence of God." "If I allow the cares of life to enter in and distract my thoughts, then this is not so." "The presence of God is felt in varying degrees according to the concentration of attention."

The function of communion.—In a passage of rare beauty Dionysius, the Areopagite, shows how "pure prayer" unites the soul with God. Prayer draws the soul toward the divine union, "as if a luminous chain were suspended from the celestial heights, and we, by ever clutching this, first with one hand and then with the other, seem to draw it down, but in reality we are ourselves carried upward to the high splendors of the luminous rays. Or as if, after we have embarked on a ship and are holding on to the cable reaching to some rock,

[8] Brother Lawrence: *The Practice of the Presence of God*, pp. 32–34. American Baptist Publishing Society.

we do not draw the rock to us, but draw, in fact, ourselves and the ship to the rock."[9]

It is not one function of the prayer of communion to change the mind of God, but to bring the purposes of man into harmony with the will of God. Communion does not pull God down to our level of insight and action but lifts us up to God's level. Prayer is not a pious attempt to persuade God to do what is contrary to his wisdom and goodness. The account of Jacob struggling with Jehovah for a blessing should not be misconstrued as an effort to overpower God and to wrest from him by sheer force a reluctant favor. Jacob contended with his lower inclinations and in an intensely dramatic prayer experience achieved the victory over himself. Prayer did not bring Jehovah down to the moral level of Jacob, but it did lift Jacob up to a higher plane.[10]

Saint Augustine writes: "I have gone astray like a Sheep that was lost, seeking thee with great anxiety without, when yet thou art within, and dwellest in my Soul, if it desire thy presence. I wandered about the Villages and Streets of the City of this world, inquiring for thee everywhere and found thee not; because I expected to meet that abroad, which all the while I had at home. . . . For thou hast not the form of a Body, nor the whiteness of Light, nor the sparkling of Precious Stones, nor the Harmony of Music, nor the fragrancy of Flowers, or Ointments, or Spices, nor the delicious taste of Honey, nor the charms of those things that are pleasant to the Touch, nor any

[9] Divine Names, III, 1. Also cited in Jones, Rufus M.: *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 110. The Macmillan Company.
[10] Genesis 32: 22–32.

other qualities by which our Senses are entertained. . . . Thanks to that light, which discovered itself to Me, and Me to myself. For in finding and in knowing myself, I find and know Thee."[11]

Grant the existence of God, and it is prayer, and especially the prayer of communion, that makes him real and intensifies the consciousness of him. But many men to-day are too perplexed to pray to God with sufficient initial confidence. They are confused and wistful rather than doubtful and skeptical about the reality of approaching God. They would like to pray with the assurance of reaching the mind of God, but they have become distracted and disturbed by modern science. Before such persons can call upon God with the belief that they will be heard they must adopt a spiritual interpretation of the natural world, and appreciate the intelligence of God and the worth of man.

They must see the whole world of nature in God. With the grasping of the fact that the world we inhabit is law-abiding, man has been compelled to abandon his crude notion of prayer as a process which takes no account of the stability and uniformity of natural events. But no man can pray into a machine in which he feels himself but a cog in a wheel within wheels and expect it to respond to a personal appeal. Until one thoroughly appreciates that the laws of nature are the laws of God, that the natural world is but the outward expression of the creative energy of God, that without the constant and consistent activity of God the world could not exist for a single moment, he cannot pray to God with a sense of reality and a con-

[11] *Mediations of St. Augustine*, made English by Stanhope, George, pp. 224–227.

viction that he will be heard. The mind should, as it were, hold a saturated solution of the doctrine of the immanence of God.

The dignity of man and prayer.—In view of the enormity and complexity of the universe, one may feel too insignificant to come within the range of the personal attention of God. One may feel lost in the vastness of the worlds, and find it hard to believe that one's cry will pierce the heart of the Eternal. Feeling like a mote in the summer air one may cry in the words of the psalmist: "What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?" Only when man grasps something of the value of himself as pointed out in the answer of the same psalmist, "For thou hast made him a little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honor,"[12] can he come unto Him who responds to prayer. When we realize that we are immortal and morally responsible beings, created in the image and likeness of God, we take courage.

The intelligence of God and fellowship.—To a richer conception of man must be added a deeper valuation of God. One may freely concede that man is an exalted being and still ask how it is possible for God to individualize humanity, to pay attention to each one of the many millions of men. How can God number the hairs of the heads of so many, how can he note the fall of so many sparrows? A conception of God's individual care is essential to earnest prayer. Communion with God is out of the question so long as one is perplexed by the conception that God's knowledge of a

[12] Psalm 8: 5.

system of worlds is diffuse and his interest in it general.

Now, the more we know about anything the more detailed our information. Knowledge breaks up masses into their constituent elements. It separates a combination into its several parts. Ignorance sees a thing as a vague whole, but knowledge reduces a whole to its units and understands each one of them. The more a shepherd knows about his flock, the less he sees it as a whole and the more he knows about each sheep. The more intelligent the carpenter, the more he knows about the particulars of the house he constructs. If the world is the product of a continuous creative activity of God, we may be sure that he understands it to the last and minutest detail. If God conducts a complex system of worlds, it follows that his intelligence is equal to his responsibilities. His knowledge and care must be intensive as well as extensive, individual as well as comprehensive.

"Consider, then, the meaning of God's knowledge of men. When a stranger thinks of China, he imagines a vague multitude, with faces that look all alike. When a missionary thinks of China, the vague multitude is shaken loose in one spot, and individuals there stand out, separately known and loved. When God thinks of China, he knows every one of the Chinese by name. He does for humanity what a librarian does for his books, or an engineer for his turbines. We stand, everyone, separate in his thought. He lifts us up from the obscurity of our littleness; he picks us out from the multitude of our fellows; he gives to our lives the dignity of his individual care. The Eternal God calls us

everyone by name. He is not the God of mankind in the mass; he is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob!"[13]

SUMMARY

The devotional prayers, exhibiting as they do the technic and mechanism of psychosynthesis, assimilate an ideal or a crisis and recombine the elements of life. A higher fusion is created in terms of the fresh spiritual insight. The prayer of aspiration is a moral dynamic, the prayer of consecration socializes the personality, the prayer of submission incorporates the inevitable pain and sorrow in life's program, the prayer of communion links the soul in living relation to Reality. Devotional attitudes clarify the ideals, deepen the moral convictions, give life direction and purpose, preserve the peace and poise of the mind, and satisfy the craving of the soul for fellowship with the Highest. Situations that were once external pressures become internal possessions. Ideals which were peripheral become inward and central. The greatest achievement of prayer is God-consciousness. It rests the soul and gives the whole world a divine significance. The consciousness of God as an inner presence and influence is the soul of prayer.

[13] Fosdick, H. E.: *The Meaning of Prayer*, pp. 50, 51. Association Press.

CHAPTER XI

PRAYER AS INSTINCTIVE

Professor James in a passage which cannot be quoted too often remarks that although many reasons are given why we should or should not pray but little is said of the reason why we do actually pray. Concerning the neglected item he writes, "The reason why we do pray is simply that we cannot help praying." This is one way of saying that prayer is instinctive. The act of prayer is an elemental function of human nature; it is as natural as breathing, as normal as love.

Religion and prayer are inseparable. In prayer the lines of religion converge. Prayer is at once the outgrowth and the soul of religion. Prayer is religion functioning. The religious nature of man is sustained by prayer and kept alive by worship. When prayer ceases religion dies. The history of the one is the history of the other. To understand the one is to understand the other. If the one is instinctive, the other is instinctive also.

RELIGION AND PRAYER AS INSTINCTIVE

Religion is man's response to the supernatural. In lower forms of religion, the response is crude and often morally undeveloped; in the higher types it is essentially ethical and social. The Christian religion is the guidance of life as a whole by the consciousness of God as he is revealed by Christ.

The basis of all forms of religion, however much they may vary one from the other, is instinctive. Comprehensively defined, an instinct is an inherited and unpremeditated tendency to act. It is an inborn readiness to act without being taught, an innate preparedness to meet particular situations for the first time. The purpose of the instinctive response is unforeseen by animals, but in the case of all normal human beings, with the exception of infants, ideas and reason throw light upon it. The ends which love, for instance, subserves are not wholly unknown to intelligent lovers. Now, religion and the human instincts bear the same essential traits. There is a universal inborn readiness to respond religiously to our total environment.

Impulses are common to the species. All normal human beings possess the capacity for fear, fighting, anger, sex, sociability, shyness, sympathy, affection, altruism, modesty, secretiveness, rivalry, jealousy, envy, play, curiosity, destruction, construction, acquisitiveness, love of approbation, appreciation of the beautiful. That religion is universal should be stated but need not be enlarged upon in this connection. The individual or tribe without the impulse and capacity to worship is as abnormal as the one devoid of the instinct of fear or curiosity.

Prayer is practically universal. A few systems of religion, like Shinto and Buddhism, originally tried to dispense with prayer, but failed fully to repress the unconquerable disposition. According to the strict letter of the tenets of Shinto, the prayers of the Mikado of Japan suffice for all its devotees, but thousands visit the shrines of this cult, deposit a gift of money and offer prayers. Buddhism also

has made concessions to prayer. Buddhism, in its original purity, seeks to rid the self of all desire, which logically precludes prayers that are rooted in a sense of need. But Buddha has been deified and is being worshiped by millions. Where Buddhism has been extensively embraced, the prayer-wheel and the rosary flourish. Confucius, the Chinese moralist, advised his disciples to have but little to do with the gods, but to-day he himself is worshiped as a god by millions. On the contrary, Christianity has always consistently preached that the prayer life is fundamental, that it should be assiduously cultivated, that its atrophy is a calamity. The fact that prayer is so prevalent, even among the adherents of faiths logically opposed to it, is one indication of its instinctive nature.

The variableness of the form of instinct and of religion.—The innate impulses are indefinite and modifiable. They are active attitudes and primitive capacities which derive their form and final character from environment and experience. The instinct to play is inborn, but just what particular games the child shall play is largely determined by the surroundings into which the child is thrust. Imitation of adult activities, as a rule, gives the play impulse its mode of expression. In the make-believe world of the child of to-day a chair becomes an airplane, in the play of a former generation the chair may have been a spinning-wheel.

The religious impulse is likewise modifiable and indefinite. It impels us to worship a higher power and to regulate life by what we conceive to be the will of God, but just what in particular our conception of God shall be and what obligations we

shall feel toward him is largely conditioned by experience. We are not ushered into the world with a complete and definite set of beliefs and practices, but with a capacity and tendency to acquire them as we live. Religious attitudes and possibilities are inborn traits and instinctive but their form and content is largely determined by instruction and training. The most accurate reason most of us can give for belonging to this or that religious denomination is that we were brought up in it. The prayer attitude which is inbred is wide and general, and in the course of experience receives its specific and particular point and direction.

The primacy of instinct and religion.—Furthermore, instinct is more fundamental and controlling than reason. Ideas are personally acquired, instincts are a racial inheritance. When the two clash, instinct is in the end victorious. The religious impulse is more elemental and influential than antagonistic opinion. The one is innate, the other acquired. The skepticism which for a season ridicules prayer and casts it aside goes down before the rush and surge of the religious impulse loosed by overwhelming needs or crushing burdens. No matter how cogently a person may have reasoned himself out of conscious dependence upon a personal and creative God, peril, grief, responsibility, anything that shakes the soul to its foundations, consumes his disbelief and induces him to pray. Prayer as a primal tendency is underground and latent in even the most skeptical. Unless human nature changes in unpredictable ways, men, being instinctively impelled, will always pray.

Prayer elemental.—Religion as instinctive, far

from being a disconnected and detachable interest, is an elemental constituent of human nature. It is not the product of mere reason, an after-thought, an intellectual amendment to life, but a normal and constitutional factor of the self. Without the religious impulse man would be as fractional and fractured as a self without fear, as maimed and truncated as a body without a head. It is as essential to the wholesomeness and fullness of life as memory or sociability. Its purpose is to adjust life to the plan and will of God. Through prayer the religious nature of man coordinates and correlates, regulates and dominates his social and moral relations. The prayer tendency is not something superimposed, or thrust upon us from without, but an inner racial urge, a primal drive. A life absolutely devoid of the prayer impulse would be as abnormal as a self without affection. The impulse to worship is not an acquired taste, but an inheritance, an inward compulsion.

Is there a special religious instinct?—Among those who contend that religion is instinctive there is divergence of opinion as to whether there is a distinct and distinguishable religious instinct. Some, opposed to the theory that there is a special religious instinct, believe that the religious response consists in the organization and direction of the various instinctive capacities for social living. The religious impulse is involved in all primitive urges, and when all instincts are functioning normally, harmoniously and especially socially the person is truly religious.[1]

Others maintain that there is a religious impulse

[1] For further discussion of this theory see Coe, G. A.: *The Psychology of Religion*, Chapters IV and XIX. The University of Chicago Press.

as definite and describable as anger or curiosity. Religion is a regulative impulse. Its purpose is to make harmony among the propulsions within the self, and between the individual and the world of nature and persons. The religious instinct regulates life, just as nesting among birds ministers to brooding and hatching, or modesty furthers the love relation. If a part of the cerebellum of the brain be removed, a lack of coordination in movement results, and one staggers like a drunken man. What the cerebellum is to the bodily organism religion is to the moral and social life. The religious impulse, properly cultivated, adjusts and controls all the instinctive capacities, refining some, compounding and fusing others, arresting the growth of still others, and sometimes substituting the one for the other. As such its characteristics are as marked as those of any other impulse.[2]

SCIENCE AND PRAYER

Manifestly, science can be no substitute for such a constitutional and instinctive activity as prayer. For things elemental there are no alternatives. Science and religion differ so radically in nature, method, and function that neither can take the place of the other.

Difference in purpose.—Their spheres of responsibility are far from identical and interchangeable. It is the function of science to examine, to describe, and to classify the facts of the natural world. It attempts to reduce the events of nature to the constant and consistent modes of behavior we call laws. Applied science bends the laws of nature

[2] This view is most convincingly set forth by Starbuck.

to the practical purposes of man; hence we have, for example, the psychology of education, of public speaking, of salesmanship, of advertising. Religion, on the other hand, concerns itself with the origin of the world which science investigates, with its meaning, its destiny. It occupies itself with God as the supreme energizing Being, with the moral self-determination of man, with life after death, with what man should strive for and pursue as the highest good.

Difference in approach.—The uniqueness of each is further revealed by their difference in method. The method of science is induction, the observation of a sufficient number of particular instances and the extension of the truth common to them, to all cases of the same class. The method of religion is deduction. It relies upon faith, intuition, life. It tests its propositions by the heart and by their social influence. Religious truth cannot be discovered in a laboratory exercise. It cannot be proved by the rules of formal logic. It is quite as impossible to prove the existence of God to one who disbelieves in him as it is to disprove his existence to one who believes in him. The recent emphasis upon intuition, faith, and moral action as sources of truth is a wholesome corrective for an almost exclusive dependence upon the method of science for the discovery of values.

Nevertheless, the proposal has been made that we let applied science displace religion. Why not disengage the discernible psychological mechanism in prayer from religion and use it to further the moral life? Why not make use of suggestion alone and as such? When a memory has turned

inward and is lacerating the soul, why not find relief in psychoanalysis apart from prayer? Why not keep life unified and whole through a process of mere psychosynthesis? An inadequate understanding of the meaning and value of both religion and science is the father of such notions.

Religion as creative.—All progress in moral and social relations is contingent upon an inner craving for the richer, fuller, freer life. Without antecedent desires and aspiration there is no moral advancement. There must be an ideal and a sense of obligation. But whence comes the consciousness of incompleteness and the yearning for more life? The mental structures such as suggestion, psychoanalysis, and psychosynthesis which we have discovered in prayer are not of themselves creative; they do not build ideals and arouse a sense of duty. Before these processes are constructed and employed by the prayer impulse there is a hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Religion supplies the incentive for moral improvement. The religious nature of man instinctively creates a standard of conduct interpreted as the will of God. Whatever is accepted as a divine obligation is binding upon both the conscience and the will of man. To keep life unified and whole man resorts to the appeal of God. Prayer which is a religious impulse, becomes active, grips and divides the self in order that it may recombine the purged and transformed elements. It is at once conscience-stirring and soul-satisfying. Religion, especially Christianity, is at once a moral revelation and a moral dynamic. Religiously motivated, man achieves spiritual ends by creating mental

means which themselves are morally and religiously neutral.

The emotional value of the religious impulse is significant. Emotion is the conscious accompaniment of instinct, being either pleasant or unpleasant in quality. So rich in emotion are some instincts, like fear and love, that they are called emotions rather than instincts by those who are not conversant with the psychological classification. Man is swayed by primal emotions as by almost irresistible forces. Emotions are impulsive; they tend toward action. The religious nature of man possesses a high potentiality of emotion which, except in unbalanced persons, discharges itself in worship and moral action. Out of the heart there surge forth moral and religious longings and desires which the prayer attitude and act strive to gratify. Emotions having religious value profoundly affect the will. Conduct has an emotional incentive which mere science as an intellectual pursuit cannot supply.

Religion as conservation.—Religion not only holds before us the vision of the ideal and urges us to be guided by it, but it also conserves and fortifies our responses to it. It does not rescue a man from the sea only to throw him back into the hungry waves. It is essentially social. In its organized and institutionalized forms, religion exerts a definite and continuous social pressure. The church as a form of organized religion is an unfailing source of strength to all who are pledged to the spiritual life it seeks to foster. It creates an environment of religious literature, music, art, worship, service. It brings kindred souls together for teaching, inspiration, and worship. Science has nothing to offer which can

take the place of the church despite its admitted imperfections. Material things do not satisfy man; they never have and never will. Their insufficiency is abundantly demonstrated. True satisfaction is religious. The church is the only great organization which has the opportunity and the facilities to construct the motives of love, sympathy, and cooperation, in which satisfaction is rooted.

THE PRAYER INSTINCT AND THE NEW WORLD

The conviction is sweeping through the peoples of the earth that the present competitive world order is doomed. They are looking for a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The world has broken down under the pressure of the present collective life of man, and has fallen under the condemnation of the teeming and groaning millions. Everywhere there is a lively consciousness of the futility of the system upon which the world is now rocking. Things once reckoned the very foundations of civilization have collapsed.

Misplaced faith.—Commerce has not kept the peace of the world. Our reliance upon barter and trade, the bank and the market, to weld the nations together, has proved to be a delusion. International commercial relations, far from promoting world-peace or tranquillity as was fondly imagined, have become the prolific breeding ground of war. The struggle for foreign markets and the sources of raw materials has divided and embittered men and nations. Business on a large as well as on a small scale, as hitherto conducted, has made men rivals and not brothers.

Neither can industrial and economic adventures,

apart from spiritual influences, redeem their pledges. Granted that the social and industrial sores of the nation should be healed, an economic program, however promising, divorced from morals and religion, cannot be applied and realized. The most commendable scheme is of no avail when the leadership to which it is committed is unscrupulous and the people themselves are without ethical motives.

Nor has science held the world together. When the scientific brain of a nation is obsessed by an unholy ambition the whole earth is imperiled. To be sure, applied science, despite the peculiar industrial conditions it has produced, has made the world more comfortable, at least in peace times. It has not made us any better. All practical scientific accomplishments are but blind and impersonal instruments which may be used as effectively for evil as for good. The submarine is a scientific attainment, but when it is in the hands of men animated by bad philosophy, the lives of the innocent and defenseless are menaced. The wireless is a startling gift of science, but it transmits the message of deceit and hate as swiftly and accurately as the word of hope and love. Inventions are tools, and in themselves possess no redemptive power.

Prayer as a builder of a new world order.—Only when the men who are behind the commercial, economic, and scientific interests and movements are impelled by justice and mercy can there be social progress. The equality of men at the polls, in the courts of law, the councils of the state, and the places of industry can be made actual and effective only by a democratic religion like Chris-

tianity. More religion is needed everywhere; in the mines, in the fields, the forests, the schools, the factories, the halls of legislation. Religion is the only force the world has ever known that can draw all the fine capacities of men into the service of a better social order.

In the spiritual culture of humanity prayer will ever be paramount. As both self-assertion and self-surrender, prayer can build the men who can build a new world. Not as a substitute for science or economics or government, but as a purifier of the springs of conduct and as a normal source of poise and power, prayer can hasten the coming of the kingdom of God which is the desire of all nations.

APPENDIX

A QUESTIONNAIRE ON PRAYER

The following questions mean to throw light on the subject of prayer, its nature and scope. This is not an attempt to establish any doctrine, but to find the principles which underlie prayer.

1. Are you conscious of the presence of God when you pray?

2. In your prayers do you make constant use of the promises of the Bible?

3. Do you really believe that God will answer your prayers?

4. Has your prayer life been hindered by any of the following things: haste, irregularity, want of faith, lack of definiteness, etc.?

5. Are your prayers sometimes answered in unexpected ways? Give instances.

6. (*a*) What things do you make objects of prayer?
(*b*) What things, if any, do you regard as improper objects of prayer?

7. State what success you have had through prayer in the following cases: cure of disease, change of heart, temporal blessing, purity of life, elimination of evil, etc.

8. How do you account for unanswered prayers, if there be such?

9. Which do you find the more effective: public prayer by either the minister or the congregation, or private prayer?

10. Give an account of any extraordinary answers to prayer you may have had.

11. Were you accustomed to pray as a child?

12. Were there any family prayers in your home?

13. Please give

(*a*) Name, (*b*) Age, (*c*) Sex, (*d*) Church affiliation, if any.

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